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REV. GILBERT TENNENT.

SERMONS AND ESSAYS

BY THE

TENNENTS

AND THEIR CONTEMPORARIES,

COMPILED FOR THE BOARD.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

This volume of discourses owes its present form to the Rev. A. Alexander, by whom most of them were selected, and it was intended as a supplement to the "Log College."*

The biographical notices are extracted from that work, and are intended simply to introduce the authors to those who have not read their full biographies.

It was the desire of the compiler to have given a specimen of the writings of the Rev. William Tennent, Sen., but he has not been able to obtain one, and probably there is not one in existence; as Dr. Alexander, in his biography of him, says, "Mr. Tennent, as far as we know, never published anything."

S. D. A.

Freehold, N. J.

* Published by the Board of Publication.

GILBERT TENNENT.

Gilbert Tennent was the eldest son of the Rev. William Tennent, Sen., the founder of the Log College. From an original document, a small memorandum book, kept by his father, we learn that he was born in the County of Armagh, Ireland, on the 5th of Oct., 1703. He was therefore thirteen or fourteen years old when his father immigrated to this country. He received his education under his father's roof, before the founding of the Log College, and when this school was opened, he assisted his father in teaching.

His first religious impressions of any permanency, were experienced soon after his arrival in this country. And during the several years in which he was under serious concern, besides his other studies, he pursued a course of theological reading. But having doubts as to his spiritual condition, he was fearful of entering the holy ministry; and commenced the study of medicine, which he prosecuted for the space of a year. But about this time, it pleased God to reveal himself to him with so much clearness and comfort, that all his doubts, and sorrows, and fears were dispelled; and the Sun of Righteousness arose upon him with healing under his wings. And no sooner was he satisfied of his saving interest in Christ, than he felt himself called to seek the ministry, which he had before been deterred from thinking of. After due preparation and study, he was licensed to preach the gospel, by the Presbytery of Philadelphia, in May, 1726. After his licensure, he preached for several Sabbaths in New Castle on the Delaware.

Declining a call to this church, he soon after accepted one from the Presbyterian Church of New Brunswick, and in the autumn of 1726 was ordained by the Presbytery of New Brunswick.

From his first entrance on the public work of the ministry, the preaching of Gilbert Tennent was very popular and attractive, with all classes of hearers. He possessed uncommon advantages as a preacher. In person, he was taller than the common stature, and well proportioned in every respect. His aspect was grave and venerable, and his address prepossessing. His voice was clear and commanding, and his manner in the pulpit was exceedingly earnest and impressive. His reasoning powers, also, were strong, and his language often nervous, and indeed sublime. No one could hear him, without being convinced that he was deeply in earnest. His style was copious and sometimes elegant. Indeed, in the vigour of his age few preachers could equal him.

In the winter of 1740 and 1741, Mr. Tennent visited Boston with Mr. Whitefield, where he spent three months, preaching almost every day with extraordinary power and success.

In May, 1743, Mr. Tennent was called to a new church in Philadelphia, formed from those who were converted under the preaching of Mr. Whitefield. This call he accepted, and exercised his ministry with great fidelity and diligence for twenty years. The only interruption to his pastoral labours in Philadelphia was occasioned by a mission to Great Britain, in conjunction with the Rev. Samuel Davis of Virginia, for the College of New Jersey.

For about three years before his death, Mr. Tennent became very infirm, so that he was unable to go through the duties which devolved upon him as the pastor of a large city congregation. His death occurred in the year 1764.

SERMON I.

THE JUSTICE OF GOD.

BY THE REV. GILBERT TENNENT.

"He is the rock; his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he."—DEUT. xxxii. 4.

MOSES introduces his song in this chapter with the most solemn and commanding magnificence, and yet with the softest charms of language. He summons the attention of the inanimate creation, partly to reprove the stupidity of Israel, and partly to bear witness to the truth of what he was about to deliver to them in the following song, either for their instruction or warning, as well as to witness to the justice and equity of the divine proceedings against that unhappy nation: "Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak, and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth."

In the second verse, the devout penman of this song wishes that the instructions contained in it, may be refreshing to and effectual upon his beloved nation, as the rain and dew upon the earth: "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew." These words may be considered as a prayer of Moses, as if he had said, O that it might do so! Thus Bishop Patrick un-

derstands the words. In the next verse, he signifies his intention to make known the glory of God, and therefore excites them to ascribe *greatness* to him; which intention he performs in the words of our text, wherein we have a representation of the divine glory and greatness apparent in the perfection of his works and equity of his government, in a variety of particulars, viz: 1. He is called a Rock, to signify the stability of his nature, the firmness of his counsels, the immutability of his promises, and the almightiness of his power; in all which respects he is a secure shelter and unshaken foundation for our resort and confidence.

2. *His work is perfect.* "His work of creation was so; all that he made in its original constitution was very good; his works of redemption and providence shall be so, when the mystery of God is finished." "God's works are true and cannot be blamed," saith Ainsworth upon the place: "God never recalls his counsels, but perfects them. God's work is called perfect, because he fulfilled what he promised to the fathers."

3. *All his ways are judgment; i. e.*, saith Henry, "The ends of his ways are all righteous, and he is wise in the choice of the means in order to those ends." By *God's ways*, we are to understand all God's providential administrations towards intelligent creatures, and by *judgment*, prudence, and justice. Hos. xiv. 9.

4. *He is a God of truth; i. e.*, as Mr. Pool observes in his Synopsis, "Faithful in his promises; whose word we may depend upon, for he cannot lie."

5. *Without iniquity*—he is perfectly free from all moral blemish and defect. "He deceives none that confide in him, and wrongs none that apply for justice, and is hard upon none that cast themselves upon his mercy."

6. *Just and right is he.* God is holy and equal in his distributions; as he is just in himself, so he is just in all his dealings with mankind; none can with reason accuse him of insincerity, unrighteousness, or levity.

Now that attribute or perfection of God which is principally represented in our text, by a beautiful variety of expressions, is his justice; this, therefore, is the subject of our meditations. That God is just, the Scriptures prove many ways, particularly, 1. *Metaphorically and figuratively*, when he is therein called a consuming fire, an angry lion, a man of war. Deut. iv. 24. Isa. xxxviii. 13.

2. *Affectively*, by attributing to him zeal, anger, jealousy, fury. Num. xi. 10. Exo. xx. 5; xxxii. 10. The aforesaid affections suppose justice in creatures, and though they be passions in them, they are in God but an act of immutable justice.

3. *Effectively*, by showing that he renders to every one according to his works. 1 Sam. xxvi. 23.

4. *Negatively*, by removing from him all injustice and iniquity, all respect of persons; and in a word, all the causes and effects of injustice. "Doth God pervert judgment, or doth the almighty pervert justice?" Job viii. 3. Dan. ix. 13. Rom. iii. 4.

5. *Positively*, by affirming and extolling his justice, by calling him a revenger, holy, right. Jer. xii. 1. Ps. xi. 7.

For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, his countenance doth behold the upright. To these we may add the words of our text, than which nothing can be more full and express: "He is a rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he;" and also that of the Psalmist, Ps. cxix. 137, "Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments." And does not reason confirm the same truth? For, 1st, if God be not just, whence is there any justice? Either there would be no justice at all, or if there was any, it would not proceed from God; or if it did, it must proceed from one who had none; each of which particulars is absurd. Besides, 2d, inasmuch as the Lord is governor of the whole universe, he would degenerate into a tyrant if he was not just; and, 3d, seeing Jehovah is judge of all the earth, how could he judge aright without being just himself? Neither can it be otherwise but that God should be just, seeing that he is absolutely perfect. All confess justice to be an excellency, involving no imperfection in it, and therefore it cannot be wanting to that being, who is absolutely and infinitely perfect.

In discoursing upon this divine attribute of God's justice, I propose to consider its nature, kinds, properties, displays, and in the fifth place, to answer some objections, and then proceed to the improvement. And,

1. Justice in its general nature may be said to be *an agreement with right and rule.* It is opposed to crookedness and obliquity, by which any thing declines from

its proper rule. Crookedness in morals is the same with sin; which the apostle John calls "a transgression of the law." 1 John iii. 4. Or, as the original word *anomia* may be rendered, a being without the law, or a wandering from the law. Justice, therefore, does coincide with rectitude or uprightness: "Lo, this only I have found, that God hath made man upright." Eccl. vii. 29. So that justice includes two things in it especially, viz: right, and an agreement with that right. 1st, I say, it includes right or that which belongs to every one: "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's." Luke xx. 25. "Knowing the judgments of God, that they that do such things are worthy of death." Rom. i. 32. It is from this right that the very name of justice is derived. And, 2nd, it includes an *agreement with this right*, and in this the form of justice consists; and the contrary to this, viz: a disagreement from right, constitutes the form of injustice. From this general description it is evident that justice admits of no degrees, for the thing either agrees with the rule of right or not; if the former, it is just, if the latter, it is unjust. Undoubtedly the justice of God, as well as of creatures, consists in an agreement with right, but with this difference, that the creatures have their rule of right prescribed by another; whereas the divine nature is a rule of right to the Almighty.

But let me pass to the second, and speak of *the kinds of justice*. And here it may be observed that justice may be considered under a threefold view, viz: as relating to God's *will*, *word*, and *deeds*. And, 1. Justice, as it relates

to the will of God, is thus described by Wendeline, viz: "That it is that whereby God is just in himself and without himself gives to every one their own by a constant will." "Justice in man," saith Mr. Leigh, "is a settled will to do right in everything to every person." Thus God hath a settled will to do right,—"shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" This constant will of God to render to every one his own, coincides with the divine essence, and may be called his *essential justice*, and is no other but the essential rectitude of his nature. And that justice of God which respects his words and deeds, may be called his *declarative or relative justice*, because it is a manifestation of the former, and respects the transactions of God with creatures. But

2. The justice of God, as it relates to his words, is called truth, faithfulness, and constancy; because it agrees with the rectitude of his nature to speak so and no otherwise. Faithfulness may be called justice, because it is a doing justice to his word.

3. The justice of God, as it respects his deeds, is twofold, viz: of *dominion* and *jurisdiction*. And, 1st, God's justice of dominion, or, as some divines term it, his disposing justice, is that whereby Jehovah, as the sole Monarch and supreme Lord of all, disposes and governs every thing in a just order; and in particular he disposes his own actions according to the rule of equity, requiring and prohibiting nothing but what is fit for intelligent creatures, in right reason, to do and forbear. In a word, this justice of dominion consists in governing reasonable creatures

agreeable to the original rectitude of their natures. 2nd, God's justice of jurisdiction consists in prescribing to reasonable creatures their proper due, and in governing them accordingly: and this the Almighty doth by three things: 1. By prescribing *laws*, which are rules tending to direct mankind in their duty to God and man, agreeable to his own sanctity, attended with rewards and punishments. "There is one lawgiver who is able to save and to destroy." James iv. 12. 2. By establishing his laws by proper *sanctions* of rewards and punishments promised and threatened (Deut. xxx. 15); now the sanction consists in promises and threatenings. And, 3. By *fulfilling the sanction*, and that both as to the reward and punishment: the former is called *remunerative*, and the latter *vindictive*. And, 1st, "The remunerative justice of God is a most ready will to perform God's promises," as Wendeline observes; when God rewards the obedience of his creatures with a free reward, proceeding from his own pure and abounding goodness, not for any worth or condignity in his people's works, as the Papists vainly dream, but for the sake of his gracious promise, by which he makes himself a debtor to them. "Who will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who by patient continuing in well doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life. But to them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, indignation and wrath." Rom. ii. 6, 7, 8. "When we have done all that is commanded, we must say that we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was (but) our duty to

do." Luke xvii. 10. "Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again? For of him, and through him, and to him are all things." Rom. xi. 35, 36. Although there be no intrinsic worth in man's obedience to merit the glory or reward promised, yet God having promised it to the creature, and having a right and power to confer it, it is just and right in him to perform his own word. And certainly, he would wrong his truth if he did not. When happiness, in Scripture, is represented as a reward, it is only to encourage or excite to obedience, by showing the inseparable connection between grace wrought in us, and glory conferred upon us. It cannot intend any merit in our works; for if we ourselves be less than the least of God's mercies, then the best actions put forth by us must be so; for, as Dr. Ridgely observes, "The action cannot have more honour ascribed to it than the agent." Being God's creatures, we have derived all from him, and consequently can offer him no more than his own. And being corrupt criminals, our services are defective, and so cannot merit good at the hand of God; nay, on the contrary, for our transgressions we merit his wrath. And therefore in respect of us, the reward of happiness is wholly gracious; but indeed in respect of Christ, who has fully answered the demands of law for his people, by his obedience and suffering, and thereby, according to the covenant transaction between his Father and him, completely purchased for them everlasting life, it may be called an *act of divine justice*. Hence it is said, "That he might be just, and the justifier of him that believes in Jesus." Rom. ii. 26. But

2. The *vindictive justice* of God is the Almighty's will to execute the threatenings of his law upon transgressors, by punishing or inflicting on them evils of suffering equal to their crimes. This is called wrath, hatred, revenge, and judgment. It is likewise termed God's "visiting iniquity." Jer. v. 9. His "setting his face against a person." Lev. xvii. 10. It is called the fire of God's jealousy, and those that are exposed to it, are said to fall into the hands of the living God. Some divines use the terms of rewarding and revenging justice, instead of remunerative and vindictive.

But here I would have it observed, that there is a less proper sense in which the word punishment is used in Scripture. Thus, when God corrects his people with his rod, this is often called punishment (Ps. lxxxix. 30, 33); and hence they are said to bear the indignation of the Lord, because they have sinned against him. Micah vii. 9. These afflictions are called *punishments*, because occasioned by sin and afflictive to sense; but they are not inflicted by God as a judge, with any demand of satisfaction, for that was made by Christ for those that believe in him; and surely, it is contrary to the nature of divine justice to require a double satisfaction for the same crimes! No! the afflictions of God's people spring from his fatherly love to them, and are sent either to prevent or correct sinful disorders. By these the Almighty humbles his people, by showing them the desert of their impieties; and by these he brings them nearer to himself, and deadens them more to a vain world, and all its varnished but empty

entertainments. Afflictions are the medicines which the great Physician uses to cure his people's manifold disorders.

But that what has been said, concerning the nature of divine justice, may be further explained and illustrated, let these things following be considered: 1st. That justice among men is two-fold, viz: either *commutative* or *distributive*. Commutative respects trade and bargains among equals, and consists in observing the rules of equity and right therein. Distributive is that which is exercised by a superior towards his inferiors, and consists in the conformity of their administrations to rule and law, and, therefore, comprises these four things in it, viz: 1. A *law* to which the acts of government should be conformed. A law, says Maresius, "est faciendorum et fugiendorum norma, sub ratione premii et poenae," i. e. "it is a rule of things to be done and avoided, on consideration of a reward or punishment." All justice, and especially distributive, has respect to a law; this is the foundation on which it is built, and the rule according to which it must be squared and accommodated.

Now the law that is the ground and foundation of justice among men, must have the following characters, viz: 1st, it must be bottomed upon natural equity, upon the nature, relation and reason of things, otherwise it will be a crooked rule, and so unworthy of observation. No human authority can alter the intrinsic goodness and badness of things; and therefore bad laws (in a moral sense) are but a recommending and enforcing iniquity by human

authority. And, 2d, the law must be enacted by competent authority and power; because legislation as well as the execution thereof, are acts of government, which those that exercise should have a right so to do, either originally or by delegation, the contrary to which tends to open a scene of confusion and blood. And hence it is well observed by some, that however just any act of government be in itself, yet it is unjust for those to meddle with it, that have no right thereto: e. g. for a judge to condemn one guilty of a capital crime to death, is just; but for a private person divested of authority to do it, is murder. And, 3d, the law must be promulgated, that it may be known, "for where there is no law, there is no transgression." Rom. iv. 15. But the

Second particular, that civil justice, or justice among men includes, is *Conformity* to the law in all administrations. When a judge does this, in all his inquiries and examinations respecting cases brought before him, he does his duty, and otherwise he perverts the ways of judgment. It is this kind of justice among men, that is an emblem or shadow of the justice of God, and therefore I have so long discoursed upon it. But to show the similitude, let me add a few words more, and inquire, what is God's declarative or relative justice, but his conformity to the law he has given his creatures in his transactions with them? Here observe, 1st, That the law which God gave to man to direct him in his service, is grounded on natural equity, or the nature and reason of things; which appears by the harmony of its precepts among themselves, and

their direct tendency to promote the glory of God, and make the creature happy in his service; the contraries to which tend to dishonour God, debase our intelligent nature, and destroy our happiness. The moral law is but a transcript of his nature as it is imitable. And hence is the Apostle's just commendatory encomium concerning it: "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just and good." Rom. vii. 12. And, 2d, That God had authority to enact laws, appears evidently from his creating all. As his infinite and eternal excellency makes him worthy of absolute sovereignty and dominion, so his producing all by his almightiness gives him an irrefragable right thereto. Human power is derived, delegated, and limited, but his is original and absolute. And, 3d, Almighty God having annexed the sanction of rewards and punishments to the law he has given his creatures, his truth stands engaged to execute the same upon suitable objects; which is likewise necessary to answer the designs of government. This execution, therefore, of the sanction of the law, or conformity thereto, in the dealings of God with his creatures, is his declarative justice, and with this even all his acts of sovereignty do really harmonize, which appears by considering,

3d. The properties of divine justice, which are these following, viz:

1. Divine justice is *impartial;* with him is no respect of persons in judgment: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done,

whether it be good or bad." 2 Cor. v. 10. Justice will not spare for the sake of the multitude, greatness, or nearness of the guilty. Did not Sodom and Gomorrah perish by fire, and was not the whole antediluvian world drowned with water? And what vast multitudes of people may we suppose did the aforesaid cities, together with Zeboim and Admah, contain? And how much more the whole world before the flood? And yet all were destroyed by a sudden and terrible stroke of divine justice. And when the angels, those spirits of excelling dignity, sinned, did not divine justice cast them into an abyss of woe? And does it not still confine them in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day? When Adam, our federal head, had transgressed the covenant, was he not banished from that paradise of pleasure he before possessed, and kept out of it by a flaming sword? Divine justice scatters kings as snow in Salmon, and before its adverse edge, their pompous armies flee apace. Ps. lxviii. 12, 14. And were not Moses and David, though so near and dear to God, punished with awful severity? Hence is that solemn and soul-affecting saying of the prophet: "Hear this word that the Lord hath spoken against you, O children of Israel. You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." Amos iii. 1, 2. But divine justice is—

2. *Universal*, so that not one sin can escape severe punishment, either in the sinner or surety: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." Gal. iii. 10.

3. Divine justice is *inexorable*, no importunities can alter its course. When once a sinner's season of mercy expires, Jehovah refuses to be entreated. "Though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness." Ez. xiv. 18, 20. This is twice repeated in that chapter, to show the infallible certainty and unspeakable importance of the truth delivered. The almighty cannot be corrupted or bribed. But that which further confirms this awful truth, is the

4th proposition, viz: The displays of divine justice. And here, to be as brief as I can, I shall only mention two instances thereof. The first of which was the sufferings our Lord endured when he stood in the sinner's room and place. How unspeakable were the tortures he endured in his sacred body, every part of which was put to exquisite pain! Deep furrows were made in his sacred back by cruel scourges, and his beauteous face exposed to contemptuous blows, yea, to shame and spitting, by the insulting herd; his venerable temples were pierced by thorns, his side and heart by a spear; the whole weight of his body hung upon a few sinewy and sensible parts in his crucifixion, and his name was treated with the greatest ignominy and scorn. But, as Mr. Flavel justly observes, "The soul of our Lord's sufferings was his sufferings in his soul." When he who knew no sin was made sin for us, his soul was made an offering for sin, his soul became sorrowful even unto death. How inconceivable must be the anguish which our Lord

endured in his soul, when in one instant of time, that whole weight of distress and pain, which was due to divine justice for all the sins of the elect world, were laid upon it, and in the meantime deserted by the Father in respect of his comfortable presence! This pressed a bloody shower from all the pores of our Lord's body in the garden of Gethsemane. This extorted that heart-rending outcry on the cross, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" No wonder the earth's foundation trembled, and the dead awoke out of their long and silent slumbers, and the sun itself, that glorious orb of light and beauty, put on a funeral robe of darkness and obscurity, to testify their surprise and sorrow on so awful an occasion, and to complete the train of mourners. But secondly,

The vindictive justice of God has a dreadful display in the torments of the damned, who are punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. As the damned are deprived of all the honours and comforts of the heavenly paradise, as they are burnt in a lake of fire, which is kindled by the breath of God, as by a river of brimstone; so their intolerable tortures, by God's inflamed jealousy, by their own guilty consciences, by wicked men and devils, will know no intermission and no end; "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever." But I hasten to the

5th proposition, which was to answer some objections offered against the justice of God. And

1st. It is objected by the Socinians, that, according to

our doctrine, God punished the innocent in the room of the guilty, namely, our Saviour in the place of sinners.

Ans. Though our Saviour was personally innocent, yet he was, with his own consent, and by his Father's imputation, guilty. And, hence, he is said, to be "made sin for us;" he willingly became the sinner's surety, and so assumed their guilt, in order to satisfy for it, and save them from ruin; and to a willing person, who had a right to dispose of his own life, especially seeing so valuable an end was answered by it, as the salvation of sinners, no injury was done by his Father imputing him to death.

2d. It is objected that God sometimes punishes the sins of the parents in their children. Ex. xx. 5.

Ans. God never punishes the sins of the parents in innocent children. As to the sin of Adam, he being the federal head, or covenant representative of his whole offspring, they sinned in him. "But they, like *Adam*, (as the word should be rendered,) have transgressed the covenant." Hos. vi. 7. "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (*i. e.* in Adam). Rom. v. 12. And as to the sins of private parents, they are not punished in children unless they be propense to them or imitate them.

3d. It is objected that God is a respecter of persons in the affair of predestination, by dispensing unequal things to those that were in an equal state, choosing one and rejecting another, without any reason but his own pleasure.

Ans. To respect persons is when, in matters of judgment, equal things according to law and right are due to several persons, and yet we dispense unequal; but this is not the case with the Almighty. "Who hath given to him," saith the Apostle, "and it shall be repaid? for of him are all things." Rom. xi. 36. As to God's grace, he owes it to no creature as such. He is Lord of his own treasures, and may do with his own what he pleases. Rom. ix. 18, 21. And, therefore, such as favour the objection, do but reply against God, as the Apostle there observes. Predestination is but an immanent act of God, which produces nothing without himself, and, consequently, dispenses neither good nor evil, though it be the pattern according to which his providence dispenses all things in time. But if we consider God's providence which dispenses salvation and damnation, that does not confer unequal things upon those that are equal; but it confers unequal things upon those that are unequal, viz: believers and unbelievers; for Christ's sake, salvation to the former, and for sin's sake, damnation to the latter. If a prince of a number of rebels, who all, according to law, deserve death, purposes and passes an act of pardon upon some to show his clemency, and lets the law take place upon others to show his justice, where is the wrong? And that is the case; for God in his purposes looked upon men as fallen, and meriting his displeasure; he might have left the whole race to perish for their sins with the devils, who after their fall had never an offer of mercy. And because Jehovah has chosen some, when he might have condemned all, shall our eye be evil because God is good?

4th. It is objected, that God suffers the wicked to prosper, and the pious to be afflicted and oppressed.

Ans. This world is a time of probation, and not of recompense. The scales will turn at the conclusion of this short scene, this transient drama. Besides, the miseries of God's people are necessary physic to cure their maladies, to which end they are sanctified by the Spirit of God. Rom. viii. 29. They are also at times sweetened with the love of Christ, and shall soon expire, and then an everlasting salvation shall commence; whereas, on the contrary, the abused prosperity of the wicked tends but to secure and increase their destruction. But it is time to proceed to the improvement. And

1st. This subject speaks *terror* to all ungodly and Christless sinners of every kind. How deplorable is their case, "who must drink of the wine of the wrath of the Almighty, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation!" O! let the secure and impenitent transgressor think on the following particulars:

1. That God, upon the account of his justice and judgments, is called the "great and dreadful God." Dan. ix. 4. Likewise, "mighty and terrible." Deut. vii. 22. "With God," saith Job, "is terrible majesty." Job xxxvii. 22. 2. That the wages of every sin is death, and that you have been guilty of a prodigious multitude, attended with awful aggravations: sins against light and love, against law and gospel, mercy and judgments; your iniquities, for number, rival the stars, and for aggravation, are red as crimson. And, 3. That the justice of

God will not, can not pass by one of them, except ye repent, but will surely proportion pains equal to all their number and heinousness. For, as has been observed, it is *impartial*, *universal*, *inexorable*. And now, seeing every imagination of the thoughts of your hearts has been, since your birth until now, only evil continually, and all your words and actions evil; for a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit, neither can he that is in the flesh please God, how dreadful must that wrath be which is proportioned to them all!

Surely it is, 1st, *Incomprehensible wrath;* the most fearful imagination cannot fully represent it by its most gloomy ideas. "Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath." Ps. xc. 11. 2d. It is *unavoidable wrath*. If we take the morning wings and flee to the uttermost ends of the earth, lo, there God's all-seeing eye will discern us, and his righteous arm arrest us. If we ascend to the top of Carmel, or descend into the deeps of the ocean, or seek to conceal ourselves with the curtain of obscurity, darkness and retirement, even there our persons and purposes will be open to the all-penetrating eye of God. "For the darkness is as the light to him, and the night shines as the day." Sinners, ye cannot escape by *policy*, for God is infinite in wisdom; nor by *power*, for he is infinite in strength, as Job observes, "He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength, who hath hardened himself against God and prospered? Job ix. 4. Nor can ye escape by *flight*, for Jehovah is omnipresent. 3d. It is *eternal wrath* (Matt. xxv. 46.); it will continue

as long as God endures; never, never, never shall it know a period. O! this gives it a dreadful and heart-rending accent! And, 4th, It is *intolerable wrath.* If the Redeemer, who was personally innocent and supported by the Godhead, cried so dolorously under this wrath, how can your hands be strong, or your hearts endure, when a jealous God deals with you, and pours out the vials of his unmixed wrath upon you, who are full of real and crimson guilt, and shall have none to succour you? And do you think that that just God, who spared not his own beloved Son, when he but stood in sinners' place, but smote him dead by the sword of his justice, and made all the waves of his almighty vengeance beat upon him, and roll over him, will spare you who are covered all over with real and scarlet guilt? No, friends, "be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." He that sows to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption. The intolerableness of the divine wrath, anger and hatred, as well as its terribleness, is represented in Scripture by a variety of bold and dreadful images of thought. I shall mention a few of them, and in the name of the great God charge the ungodly to think upon them: "For a fire is kindled in my anger, and shall burn to the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. I will drop mischiefs upon them. I will spend my arrows upon them." Deut. xxxii. 22, 23. "Which removeth the mountains and they know it not; which overturneth them in his anger; which shaketh the earth out of her place,

and the pillars thereof tremble; which commandeth the sun and it riseth not, and sealeth up the stars." Job ix. 5, 6, 7. "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup." Ps. xi. 6. Elsewhere Jehovah threatens to wound the hairy scalp of the wicked, and tear them in pieces when there shall be none to deliver them. Hos. v. 14. That he will be to them as a lion and as a leopard, and meet them as a bear bereaved of her whelps, devour them like a lion and rend the caul of their hearts. Hos. xiii. 8. And with what magnificence and grandeur of diction does the prophet Nahum speak upon this solemn subject: "God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and is furious. The Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth. The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him." Nahum i. 2—7.

Now as the consideration of God's justice and wrath ministers terror to all the ungodly in general, so especially

and particularly to these following, viz: 1. Epicures, who indulge a sensual security, and put the evil day far from them. Surely such treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Surely the day of the Lord will be to them, as the prophet expresseth it, "cruel with wrath and fierce anger." Isa. xiii. 9. And, 2d. All unjust persons who are guilty of fraud in contracts, and dealings with men, or respecting of persons in judgment. "Woe to him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong." Jer. xxii. 13. Ps. lxxxii. 2, 5. 3d. All hypocrites, such as are unjust to God and their own souls, who cover their inward injustice with an outward show of piety. Such are an abomination to God, and may expect to be cut asunder by the sword of divine justice. Matt. xxiv. 50, 51. 4th. All murmurers, who call in question the justice of God in his judgments, and kick with the heel against the Most High, under frowns of providence. For this, the whole congregation of Israel fell in the wilderness, and never saw Canaan, two excepted. Num. xiv. 27—30. Now the use I would advise poor graceless sinners, of every age and order, to make of the justice of God, is to be excited by it to fly to Christ for security and defence. "He is a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the storm." Isa. xxxii. 2. 1st. He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. In Him God the Father has declared his righteousness (Rom. iii. 25); and Him he is willing to make righteousness to such as accept of him. 1 Cor. i. 30. Well, seeing divine justice must

be satisfied for the wrong done by our offences, either by us, or a surety in our place, or else we must perish eternally: then, seeing we ourselves cannot satisfy, because we are poor, imperfect and finite creatures, let us hasten to Christ and receive him by faith, as the gospel offers him, that so we may be justified by faith, and securely rest on and rejoice in that Jesus, who has fulfilled the righteousness of the law for his people. Rom. viii. 3. But, 2d. This subject speaks comfort to all believers in every one of their troubles; for from this they may see that they are afflicted less than their iniquities deserve, that a Father's love is the spring of them, who chastens them lest they should be condemned with the world. And particularly we may draw comfort from this subject, under calumnies and wrongs, when we think that we have a witness in heaven, a just Judge there, who will uphold us in a good cause, and reward us according to our righteousness, and make it sooner or later to "shine forth as the light, and our judgment as the noonday." Ps. xxxvii. 6. Yea, in troubles of conscience God's justice yields support, when we consider that it was once satisfied by our Lord, and that it is contrary to its nature to require a double satisfaction. Hence is the Apostle's query, "Who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died." Rom. viii. 34.

But there are these following duties, which, from the consideration of divine justice, we should be exhorted to perform, viz: 1st. That we beware of depending upon our own righteousness, upon the one hand, with the Pharisee (Luke xviii. 11); and of the neglect of duty, on the other,

with the sluggard whose hands refuse to labour: "for without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Heb. xii. 14. 2d. Let us walk with humble reverence and child-like fear before the righteous God, as with a consuming fire, avoiding every appearance of evil, and continually, in all our religious services, eyeing Jesus the Mediator and Intercessor, who alone is able to cover their defects, and render them acceptable to his Father by his abundant righteousness; in whom alone we are complete, and safe from every impending storm. For when in him, the flaming sword of divine justice, which before kept us out of paradise, guards and assists our entrance into it. And, 3d. Let us glorify God on account of his justice of every kind, whether essential, declarative, judicatory, legislative, remunerative, or vindictive; for transcendent beauty shines therein. Let us say with the Psalmist, "Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne." Ps. lxxxix. 24. And with Paul, "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! his judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out." Rom. xi. 33. Such is the strictness of divine justice in all his proceedings, that it is compared to mountains, and to the abyss. "Thy righteousness is as the great mountains, thy judgments are a great deep." Ps. xxxvi. 6. And let us join with the inhabitants of heaven in celebrating the justice of God. "And after these things I heard a great voice of much people, in heaven, saying, Hallelujah, salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God, for true and righteous are his judgments." Rev. xix. 1, 2.

In fine, let us labour to imitate the justice and righteousness of God, by seeking the righteousness of Christ to our justification, in the manner before expressed; also by seeking the inherent righteousness, which it pleased God at first to implant in our natures by creation (Ecc. vii. 29), which we have lost by sin. I say, let us fervently and frequently cry to God by humble supplications, in the name of Christ, that he would be pleased to implant or infuse into our souls, by regeneration, the habits or principles of that righteousness; and, having the same implanted, let us exercise them in our whole practice. 1. Towards God, by rendering him his due, viz: ourselves, and all that honour, love, trust, and service which he requires in his word. And 2. Towards our neighbour, in all matters of government, judgment, and commerce, ruling without oppression, judging without respect of persons, and dealing without fraud, falsehood, or imposition. And 3. Towards ourselves, in a right improvement of the seasons of mercy, thereby securing our salvation; and also in not suffering ourselves to be wronged in our temporal interest. A great part of the image of God, and beauty of religion, consists in justice: and as the blessing of God rests upon such here, so they shall receive from the just Judge of heaven and earth a crown of righteousness hereafter, which shall never fade away. That this may be the happy lot of us all, may God grant, for Christ's sake! Amen.

SERMON II.

THE DIVINE MERCY.

BY THE REV. GILBERT TENNENT.

"And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering.—Exodus xxxiv. 6.

* * * * * In discoursing upon this divine attribute of mercy, it will be necessary to speak upon its *nature*, *kinds*, and *properties*. And

1st. Mercy, in respect of its *nature*, may be thus described, viz: That it is the goodness of God extended to the miserable. Here good and bad angels are excluded: the good, because they are not miserable, and the bad, because they are wholly given up to justice. "But God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness to be reserved unto judgment." 2 Pet. ii. 4. Or the mercy of God may be thus described, viz: That it is that property of the Supreme Being whereby he is inclined to succour his creatures in misery, together with its kind effects upon them. Here observe, 1st, that the special object of mercy is the creature in misery, and thus it is distinguished from

other attributes. Goodness considers its object as *indigent*, and so communicates needed benefits, but mercy considers its object as *miserable*, because of sin; and therefore, though an innocent creature be the object of divine goodness and bounty, it is only a fallen and sinning creature that is the proper object of God's mercy. Grace is mercy or goodness freely dispensed, and therefore it considers its object, not only as miserable, but unworthy. Whereas, long-suffering consists in the suspension of merited vengeance, and the communication of unmerited benefits. Thus you may see that all these attributes of the Deity import the communication of some good to the creature, and are only distinguished in relation to the objects upon which they are exercised. Misery is the foil of mercy, it can have no other object; hence it is said, that "his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel." Judg. x. 16. Undoubtedly the virtue of mercy was in God from all eternity, but there was no room or occasion for its displays, till the creature's fatal fall from God, and misery consequent upon it, proved it an object to be exercised upon. Man by sin robbed himself of his beauty and happiness, and exposed himself to all the manifold miseries of this and the next life; all which are included in the sentence of death annexed to the breach of the first covenant. As man by sin had lost all right to happiness, and, on the contrary, rendered himself liable to all the threats of the divine law; so by this he likewise became "altogether unprofitable," (Rom. iii. 1, 2,) having lost all his original power to glorify God by active obedience, and

thus he had no ground from himself to expect the divine favour.

2d. Seeing the misery of fallen mankind is twofold, viz: of sin, and punishment; consequently, the operations of mercy consist in affording suitable succours under these maladies. In respect of sin, the mercy of God succours in the following instances:

1. In reconciling sinners to himself, by the blood of his only begotten Son. 2 Cor. v. 18. For the purchase of which reconciliation, the eternal Father gave his beloved Son to shame, pain and death. John iii. 16. And for the application thereof, he confers faith upon the elect, whereby they are enabled to accept and rely upon the blessed Jesus as Mediator and Reconciler. And

2. By renewing sinners by his Spirit, whereby the tyranny and dominion of sin is broken, and the people of God enabled to overcome sin, and triumph over it. "Let not sin reign in your mortal bodies, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." Rom. vii. 12. "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. vii. 25.

In respect of punishment, divine mercy succours in the following manner:

1. By bearing with the sinner for a time before judgment is inflicted. "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?" Rom. ix. 22.

2. By threatening punishments against the impenitent, in order to reclaim them from their trespasses. God warns

before he wounds, and sends his servants to slay sinners by his word, before he slays them by his sword.

3. By pointing to a remedy, whereby the impending stroke of divine justice may be averted. "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation against whom I have pronounced turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil I thought to do unto them." Jer. xviii. 7, 8. If sinners repent of the evil of sin, God will avert the evil of judgment.

4. By inviting, and expostulating with, sinners to accept of the remedy proposed. "Come now, and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Isa. i. 18. "Thus saith the Lord, what iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity and become vain?" Jer. ii. 5.

5. By receiving into favour those that comply with the remedy, how great soever their trespasses have been, by forgiving their sins, sanctifying and sweetening their sorrows, and supporting them under them by his Spirit, love and power. "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases." Ps. ciii. 3. "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee." 2 Cor. xii. 9. "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation." 2 Cor. i. 3, 4. And

6. When he begins to inflict deserved judgment, (in general,) he doth it by degrees, first he sends lighter calamities, and when those do not reclaim the sinner, he sends heavier. In the day of God's rough wind, he stays his east wind. First rods are tried, and if those do not avail, scorpions may be expected. Jehovah does not all at once stir up "all his wrath." Ps. lxxviii. 38. But the

2d proposition was to speak of the *kinds* of mercy. Now the mercy of God may be said to be two-fold, viz: either *common* or *special*. Common mercy consists in conferring without distinction upon the children of men, the outward comforts and conveniences of life, and hence the Almighty is said to cause his sun to rise upon the evil and the good, and to send his rain upon the just and the unjust. Matt. v. 45. But the special mercy of God consists in conferring upon the elect, such things as do accompany salvation, and that through Christ, in the channel of the new covenant. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places, in Christ." Eph. i. 3. But I proceed to the

3d proposition, which was to discourse upon the *properties* of divine mercy. And

1. It is *eternal*. "The mercy of God is from everlasting to everlasting." Ps. ciii. 17. It is repeated twenty-six times in one psalm, "that his mercy endureth for ever." Ps. cxxxvi. And this may justly enhance our esteem of it, and desire after it. Though God may hide

his face for a little moment, yet with everlasting kindness will he return to his people. And

2. God's mercy is *great*, and hence God is said to be "plenteous in mercy." Ps. lxxxvi. 5. "Rich in mercy." Eph. ii. 4. And, in Psalm li. 1, we read of the multitude of his "tender mercies." And in 2 Sam. xxiv. 14, his mercies are expressly said to be "great." But methinks the greatness of God's mercy appears especially by considering these two things, viz: What is the sinner's *due*, according to strict justice, and the *mitigation* thereof which he enjoys in this world? Surely "the wages of sin is death." Rom. vi. 23. Which includes all the miseries of this present life, as well as the pains of hell hereafter. Now, therefore, every mitigation of those miseries, every comfort the sinner enjoys, is mercy; it is what the sinner has forfeited a right to; it is what he deserves not.

3. The mercy of God is *incomparable*. "They say, if a man put away his wife, and she go from him and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? But thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet return unto me, saith the Lord." Jer. iii. 1. The merciful God exceeds his creatures both in giving and forgiving. And

1st. In *giving*. Our donations are often extorted from us, but He gives of his own accord, without any incentive but what is in his own bosom. Isa. lxv. 1.

We give but small gifts, but He gives the greatest, viz: Himself, his Son, his Spirit, his kingdom. Job iii. 16.

We give to our friends, but Jehovah confers many donations on his enemies. Matt. v. 45.

We are soon weary of giving, but so is not God; he is unwearied in his mercy (to the penitent); "he giveth liberally and upbraideth not." James i. 5. And

2d. The merciful God exceeds his creatures in *forgiving*.

Men are revengeful to those that wrong them, but God is "merciful and gracious, long suffering," as our text asserts. How remarkable, to this purpose, are these words of the prophet, "I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim, for I am God and not man!" Hos. xi. 9.

Men are difficultly drawn to forgive, and cannot forgive often; but God is ready to pardon (Neh. ix. 17); and does multiply pardons.

Sometimes men forgive when it is not in their power to revenge themselves, but sinners are always under God's control and within the reach of his arm.

4. The mercy of God is *sure* and infallible. "Incline your ear and come unto me, hear and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Isa. lv. 3. And hence it is that the gifts and callings of God are said to be without repentance, and that the foundation of God stands sure. The Lord knoweth who are his. God's special mercy to his people is built upon the sure and invariable foundation of his purposes and promises, as well as the satisfaction and intercession of Christ. And

5. God's mercy is *free*. "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated, according to the purpose of him, who worketh all things after the coun-

sel of his own will." Eph. i. 11. Albeit the virtue of mercy belongs to God, in respect of his being, yet the dispensation of it depends entirely upon God's good pleasure, and hence the apostle Paul informs us, that "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy," and that "he hath mercy upon whom he will have mercy, and whom he will, he hardeneth." Rom. ix. 16, 18.

Now, because when such things as are really or seemingly contrary are put together, they illustrate each other; it may not be improper, before I proceed to the improvement of this subject, to discourse upon the severity of God in his judgments, which is seemingly opposed to his mercy. Of this, mention is made in Rom. xi. 22, and in many other places of scripture; and of this there are many examples upon sacred record, such as the instance of the fallen angels, our first parents, the old world, Pharaoh, the Egyptians, Korah, Dathan, Abiram, Achan, Ananias and Sapphira, and many others. From which we may gather that God's judgments, which he exercises by his severity, are no other than singular punishments, inflicted for singular offences. The meritorious cause of them is some aggravated iniquity, the nature of which is often pointed out by the punishment inflicted, which is not common but singular. Adonibezek, who had cut off the thumbs and great toes of threescore and ten kings, was served so himself. Judges i. 6, 7. And hence Samuel saith concerning Agag, that "as his sword made women childless, so his mother should be childless among women." 1 Sam. xv. 33. Hence the Lord elsewhere threatens that those

who shed the blood of others, should themselves have blood to drink. Thus you see that the punishment does often resemble the sin that procured it. Now the judgments of God are of various kinds, viz: Spiritual or bodily, private or public. Spiritual judgments are such as these, viz: A famine of the word. Amos viii. 11, 12. Leanness and backsliding. Rev. ii. 5. Errors in judgment. "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11. Corporal judgments are war, pestilence, famine, drought and the like. Now the procuring causes of public and epidemical judgments are such as the following, viz: Ingratitude against God. Isa. i. 3. Contempt of his word. "Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned? for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law." Isa. xlii. 24. Another cause of judgments, is slighting of the ministers of God. "But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his word, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy." 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16. Besides, pride and idolatry are procuring causes of divine judgments. "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be brought down." Isa. ii. 11. Jer. ii. 13, 14. Likewise the following evils against our neighbour, are causes of divine judgments, viz: Oppression of the poor. "The Lord will enter into judgment with the ancients of his people, and the princes thereof; for ye have eaten up the vineyard, the spoil of the

poor is in your houses." Isa. iii. 14. 2d. Wronging the widow and fatherless. "They judge not the fatherless, neither does the cause of the widow come before them." Isa. i. 23. 3d. Cheating the labourer of his hire. "Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong, that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work." Jer. xxii. 13. The prophet Hosea mentions a number of causes together, in the fourth chapter of his book, verses 1, 2. "Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel, for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out and blood toucheth blood, therefore shall the land mourn." To the aforesaid causes of divine judgments I may add covetousness and hypocrisy. "Woe unto them that join house to house—therefore my people are gone into captivity." Isa. v. 8, 13. "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger —I will send him against a hypocritical nation." Isa. x. 6. Here it may be observed, that judgments are not always sent, except the aforesaid evils become general, and are attended with impudence, after various warnings. Jer. v. 1. Isa. iii. 9. Ps. xcv. 10, 11. Now the judgments of God are always just, and sometimes unsearchable and wonderful; for sometimes he not only sends them on the ungodly, but upon his own people. Yea, as the apostle Peter observes, "Judgment begins at the house of God." The Lord threatened his people of old, that them only he

had known of all the families of the earth, therefore he would punish them for their iniquities. Hence David tells us, that his flesh trembled for fear of God, and that he was afraid of God's judgments. I may add that the end of God's punishments is the glory of God's holiness, the conversion and humiliation of some, and the hardening of others. Witness the prodigal, Pharaoh, and others. But it is time to proceed to the improvement of this subject. And

1st. We should be cautious of abusing God's mercy; let us beware that we suck not poison out of that sweet flower. To take encouragement to go on in sin, because of God's mercy, is the vilest instance of ingratitude, and justly exposes to an aggravated condemnation; abused mercy turns into enraged fury and vengeance. "If he bless himself, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk after the imagination of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst; the Lord will not spare him, but the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him." Deut. xxix. 19.

2d. The mercy of God offers encouragement and support to the people of God, in all their distresses, whether outward or inward. Are they afflicted with outward straits? The merciful God, who is their Shepherd, will not suffer them to want, but make their bread and water sure. He that hears and feeds the ravens, will surely hear and help his children. Have they backslidden from God, and are they labouring to be sorrowfully sensible thereof? Then

may they encourage themselves in this, that all God's ways are mercy and truth, and that the mercy of Jehovah endureth for ever. He will begin and end with mercy, and such as are under the first convictions of sin may take encouragement from the mercy of God, which is great above the heavens, and most freely dispensed upon the vilest creatures. Mercy considers not what one deserves, but what he needs. God is more inclined to mercy than wrath. Justice and judgment is his strange work, but mercy is his delight. Micah vii. 18. "It is delightful to the mother," saith Chrysostom, "to have her breasts drawn; so it is to God to have the breasts of his mercy drawn." The Almighty is slow to anger, but ready to forgive. Ps. lxxxvi. 5. Let us, therefore, entertain honourable thoughts of God's mercy, and trust in it for ever. Ps. lii. 8. What greater encouragement can there be to believe, than the mercy of God? Mercy is one of the most orient pearls of the crown of God; he reckons it his glory to be conferring pardons upon penitent transgressors; and, therefore, he invites poor sinners to come and lay hold on his mercy. "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." Rev. xxii. 17. Mercy woos sinners in the most importunate, moving and condescending strains. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat: come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Isa. lv. 1. And what joy does the Almighty express, when sinners accept of the proposals of his mercy! when the prodigal son returned from his wanderings, how much did

it please the indulgent father, who made a feast to express his joy on that occasion!

We should be induced to inquire into the state of our souls, in order to know whether we have an interest in the special mercy of God or not. For it will be miserable and ruining to us in the issue, if we content ourselves with common mercies. Now we may be helped to determine this important point, by an impartial comparing of ourselves with the following particulars, viz:

1. Those who have an interest in the special mercy of God, have been (if of adult age when converted) made sensible of their misery without it, and their unworthiness of it, with the prodigal and publican.

2. They have been stirred up to solicitous inquiries, how they might obtain an interest therein. Acts ii. 37.

3. Such have, deliberately and without reserve, consented to embrace Christ Jesus (the fountain of mercy) in all his offices and relations, and resolved to bear his cross and obey his laws. Job i. 12.

4. And, in consequence hereof, they find the general bias of their affections going towards God, and an habitual carefulness to do the things that are pleasing to him. Now, those who, upon examination, find themselves destitute of the aforesaid characters, should, in order to obtain mercy, 1. Think seriously of all the kindnesses of heaven towards them, together with their innumerable sins against those mercies, and the dangers to which they are thereby exposed. 2. Attend with diligence upon the preached word; for it is by the foolishness of preaching that God saves those

that believe. 3. Bewail your sins against the mercies of God; let the goodness of God lead you to repentance. 4. Try to reform your lives. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the ungodly man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord, for he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." And, 5. Pray earnestly and frequently to God for mercy, in the name of Christ, with fear and hope.

And let me exhort those that have obtained the special mercy of God to walk worthy of it. 1. Praise God for his mercy in the Psalmist's language: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name." Ps. ciii. 1. Such as have been monuments of mercy, should be trumpets of praise.

2. Love God. Mercy is a powerful excitant to this. "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength." Ps. xviii. 1. Surely that heart is harder than marble and adamant, which mercy will not melt. "I would hate my own soul, (saith Austin,) if I did not find it loving God." We should love God for outward comforts, but much more for special and enduring mercies.

3. Let us imitate the mercy of God, in showing mercy to our fellow creatures. God is the Father of mercy, show yourselves to be his children by being like him. It was a just observation of Ambrose, "that the sum of religion is to be rich in works of mercy." O let the lamp of our profession be filled with the oil of mercy! And to this our dear Lord exhorts us, "Be merciful, as your Father also is merciful." Matt. vi. 36. But let the

despisers and abusers of mercy, who go on in a course of any of the evils before mentioned, which procure the judgments of God, be entreated to repent, and reform speedily, otherwise ye may expect the dreadful effects of divine severity in some or all of the instances thereof before expressed. By your ungrateful return for mercies received, "you treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God." Though God be gracious and merciful, slow to wrath, yet will he by no means clear the guilty.

SERMON III.

THE GRACE OF GOD.

BY THE REV. GILBERT TENNENT.

"And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering.—Exodus xxxiv. 6.

The next divine attribute that comes now, according to the order of our text, to be considered, is the *grace of God.* "The Lord is merciful and gracious."

There is nothing more frequently mentioned in Scripture, than the grace of God. I shall mention but a few passages, for if I should take notice of all, I must transcribe a great part of the Bible. "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has made us accepted in the beloved." Eph. i. 6. "He is gracious and full of compassion." Ps. cxii. 14. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, be with you all." 2 Cor. xiii. 14. In speaking upon this subject, I purpose

I. To explain its *nature.*

II. Show its *kinds.*

III. Mention some considerations, serving to manifest its *sovereignty* and *glory.*

IV. Consider what is really and seemingly *opposed* thereto, and then proceed to some improvement.

I. I return to consider the first proposed, which was to explain the nature of the grace of God. Now, the word *grace* signifies something that is free, as was observed in the preceding sermon, and it is taken two ways, either for an attribute of God, which is in God, or for the gift of God, which is from God. In the first sense, the grace of God signifies his free and sovereign benevolence, by which he peculiarly favours and doth good to his creatures, whence God is called gracious, as in our text, *i. e.* endued with grace; as from his goodness he is called good, and from his justice, just. The gifts of God, which are the effects of the grace that is in him, are metonymically called grace, especially such of them as are peculiar and special, *i. e.* such as are conferred upon some, rather than others. Hence, some divines observe, that the word grace intends either, 1. The grace freely *giving* (Mat. xi. 26), which they term (*gratiam gratis dantem*), or the free favour of God; or the grace freely *given*, which they call (*gratiam gratis datam*). And this imports any kind of benefits which the Almighty confers upon his creatures, whether good or bad, which makes them not in the least the more acceptable to God; or, 3. The grace which makes acceptable, which they term (*gratiam gratum facientem*), viz: all the saving gifts of God, faith, hope, charity, by which we please him.

Now, the grace of God may be thus described, viz: that it is a property of the Deity, whereby he is inclined to

dispense undeserved kindnesses upon his creatures freely, and in a sovereign way. The dispensations of grace have no dependence upon any dignity or merit of creatures, upon whom benefits are conferred (Rom. xi. 6.); but the whole reason thereof is the good pleasure of God's will, (Matt. xi. 26,) which respects all creatures, even to the noblest angels. Whatever any of these enjoy, they have it of grace; for who, among all created beings, has first given to God, "and it shall be recompensed to him again?" Rom. xi. 35. In the meantime, these things are more properly and peculiarly ascribed to grace, which are different from nature. Nature and grace should not be confounded: such things as by the kind constitution of God, belong to every creature, according to their different kinds, are not usually called grace, because, though they be undue, yet they belong to nature. But to make this more plain, let us consider

II. The kinds of grace: and here it may be observed, that grace is three-fold, viz: universal, common, and saving. And

1. Universal grace is that, whereby Jehovah dispenses natural things upon all his creatures. And hence he is called the "Saviour of men." 1 Tim. iv. 10. And is said to "preserve man and beast." Ps. xxxvi. 6. He causes his sun to rise upon the fields of the evil and the good, and sends his rain upon the just and unjust. He gives to man life, health, strength, and all the supports he enjoys therein, all which, being undeserved, may be called grace:

but according to the usage of scripture and antiquity, they seldom and less properly bear that name.

2. Common grace consists in the communication of moral good things upon men promiscuously, whether they be good or bad, elect or not elect; such as natural wisdom and prudence, and all the train of moral virtues, in which even some pagans have excelled. And to these we may add, all outward religious privileges and means of grace; together with those transient effects which are sometimes produced by them upon the unregenerate, such as some kind of illumination, and stirrings of religious affections. In a word, all those common operations of the Holy Spirit which are not followed by an habitual and saving change, must be ascribed hereto. Of these mention is made in Heb. vi. 4—6, and also in the parable of the sower: "But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while, for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended." Matt. xiii. 20, 21. But

3. Saving grace is that undue or undeserved love of God, whereby he confers upon the elect only, saving benefits, of his own mere good pleasure. Here observe

First. That it is love, or the kind inclination or propension of God's will, to communicate good to his elect.

Secondly. It is undue, undeserved love. The objects of this love, considered as creatures, can merit no good at the hand of God. Seeing they have received their all from him, surely they cannot put the Almighty in their debt,

by giving him what is his own; and considered as sinners, who, by their voluntary transgression, have fallen short of his glory, they deserve his high and dreadful displeasure.

Thirdly. It is distinguishing love, manifested to the elect in a sovereign way, according to the good pleasure of God's will. Eph. i. 9. That is given to one which is denied to another, and only because it is God's pleasure; hence is that query of one of Christ's disciples, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world?" John xiv. 22. And does not our Lord himself thank his eternal Father for the displays of his sovereignty in this respect? "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Matt. xi. 25, 26. It is but a few, a remnant of the fallen race of mankind, upon whom God is pleased to vouchsafe, and in whom he is pleased to glorify, his special grace. Luke xiii. 24. Rom. ix. 2, 7. "Esaias crieth also concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved."

Fourthly. It is efficacious love, which confers saving benefits; hence it is called, "the grace of God, which bringeth salvation." Tit. ii. 11. And the blessings it vouchsafes, are termed "things that accompany salvation." Heb. vi. 9. And hence the Psalmist prays, "Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people. O visit me with thy salvation; that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the glad-

ness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance." Ps. cvi. 4. And here it may be necessary to observe particularly, that divine love confers freely upon the elect, or concerts for them, the following important benefits, viz:

1. Election; this is free and gracious, without faith or works foreseen. "Even so then, at this present time also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace." Rom. xi. 5. "Having predestinated us, unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." Eph. i. 5. "If by grace, then is it no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace, * * and work is no more work." Rom. xi. 6. To the same effect the apostle elsewhere observes, that "it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." Rom. ix. 16. It is inconsistent with the independency and immutability of God, to suppose that anything without him should alter or incline his will.

2. Redemption is likewise of free grace. The contrivance of this scheme of happiness, as well as the sending of the blessed Son of God to effect it, by his obedience and sufferings, were marvellous displays of the Father's pure affection to a miserable world. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John vi. 10. And to what else than free grace can we ascribe God the Father's acceptance of the suretiship of Christ in the sinner's room and place? Strict justice certainly demands

personal satisfaction; and does not the love of Christ pass knowledge, in that he who is over all, God blessed for ever, came into a state of the worst abasement, voluntarily to save worthless dust from perpetual ruin? How sweetly does the Apostle Paul speak to this effect: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich!" 2 Cor. viii. 9. Besides, it may be here observed, that redemption by the satisfaction of Christ is frequently, in Scripture, restrained to a certain number, who are called the *people* of God, the *sheep* of Christ, and such as were given him by his Father. Matt. i. 21. John x. 15; xvii. 9.

Albeit the blood of the Son of God be of infinite value, and, therefore, the satisfaction made by it may, in this respect, be said to be universal; yet, inasmuch as it was neither the design of the Father, nor the Son, that it should be spent for all, so as to be saved by it, it is, therefore, to be referred to singular grace. Moreover,

3. The application of redemption in all its branches, is of free grace, as may appear by the following induction of particulars, viz:

Effectual calling is said to be according to God's purpose. Rom. viii. 29.

Faith is called the gift of God. "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Eph. ii. 8.

Conversion is not of flesh nor blood, nor of the will of man, but of God. None of these graces which I have

mentioned, are the fruits of free will; "for we are not sufficient to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." 2 Cor. iii. 5. No, they are all the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. v. 22), who produces them not by moral suasion, like poor creatures, but by an almighty, creating power, taking away the stony heart, and giving a heart of flesh. 1 Cor. iii. 5, 6. Ps. li. 10. Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. And

Justification, whereby an elect sinner is freed from the guilt of sin and hath a right to eternal happiness, is of free grace. "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Rom. iii. 24. It is entirely without works. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ—for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." Gal. ii. 16.

Our *adoption*, or right, to the important privileges of children, and joint heirship with Christ, is also of pure grace. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." Eph. i. 5, 6.

Our *salvation*, in regard to the right thereto, is of grace. And, hence, eternal life is said to be "the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. vi. 23. And, elsewhere, we are said expressly to be "saved by grace," Eph. ii. 8. In the meantime it should be remembered, that good works are the way to the kingdom, though they

be not the cause of our reigning, as Barnard of old observed, "Though our right to happiness is of grace, as was before observed, yet the Almighty hath, by his gracious constitution, so ordered the matter, that good works are necessary to the possession of it." Matt. xxv. 21, 34, 35. I proceed

III. To mention some considerations serving to manifest the sovereignty and glory of God's grace. And 1. Methinks the glory of divine grace appears by considering the author of it, who is a being infinitely and invariably happy in himself, as well as essentially and eternally glorious; and so neither needs the services of creatures, nor can be benefitted by them. Our goodness extends not to him, neither is it any gain to the Almighty, that we are righteous. To acknowledge God's glory, adds no more to its lustre, than speaking well of the natural sun adds to its beauty.

It may be here also observed, that Jehovah would have had millions of angels to celebrate his praise and execute his pleasure, although he had made his justice triumph in the ruin of the whole human race, which, certainly, he might have done. Or, he could have formed innumerable creatures of a more noble order than any of the creation to celebrate the glory of his attributes, if it had so pleased his Majesty: for he is almighty in power, hath the residue of the Spirit, and can raise up children even out of the stones to Abraham. But

2. Let us consider the object upon which this divine grace is conferred, and we shall find

First. That it is man, not angels. Our Saviour took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham; because he designed to save the one, and to reserve those that fell of the other, in chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day. What is man but dust and ashes? A worm that is crushed before the moth, altogether unworthy of the kind notice of the great and glorious God. How amazing is the distinguishing grace of God in passing by creatures of a higher order, and fixing his love upon man!

Secondly. It is sinners upon whom divine grace is conferred. Man, by creation, was but dust, but by sin he is become polluted dust, and so odious and loathsome, as well as wretched and miserable. And this doleful state he has wilfully brought himself into, and wilfully continues in, against all the remonstrances of conscience, against all the kind importunities of a condescending God and Saviour. Man by sin has brought this twofold misery upon himself: 1. That he deserves no good, and, 2. That he deserves all evil. How can these deserve good at the hand of God, whose persons and performances are covered with deformity and pollution? Indeed, we deserve not the least common mercy, how much less, then, can we merit special benefits? "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, thou hast showed unto thy servant." Gen. xxxii. 10. Men in a state of nature are unprofitable creatures, they are neither prepared to receive benefits, nor able to prepare themselves, seeing they are dead in sins and trespasses. And by their multi-

plied impieties they deserve the divine displeasure, and provoke him to inflict it. As they are children of wrath by nature, so they weary the Almighty by continued iniquities in practice. Eph. ii. 3. Isa. xliii. 24. And

Thirdly. The persons to whom divine grace is given, are enemies to God, both in their minds and lives. "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Rom. viii. 7. Now, enmity imports a high degree of fixed and implacable spite. O dreadful state! This inward enmity unregenerate sinners bewray by their rebellion against God in practice, and cruel confederacies with his declared enemies. "And you that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled." Col. i. 21.

Fourthly. It is generally the poorer and meaner sort of men, that are favoured with divine grace, while the rich, honourable, and great are passed by. Many who make a considerable figure in the world, by the keenness of their natural and acquired endowments, and by the splendour of their outward circumstances, are entirely destitute of special grace, while others, who are poor and despised, are favoured therewith. This subject the apostle Paul discourses largely upon. "Not many mighty, not many noble are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world, to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, and things

that are not, to bring to nought things that are." 1 Cor. i. 26—28.

Fifthly. Many of those to whom divine grace is given were, before conversion, notorious sinners, some blasphemers, persecutors and injurious. These things the apostle Paul ascribes to himself; he shut up many of the saints in prison, consented to their death, punished them in every synagogue, compelled them to blaspheme, and being exceeding mad against them, he persecuted them to strange cities. Acts xxvi. 10, 11. 1 Tim. i. 13, 15. Some, before conversion, have been idolators, as the Ephesians. Some, fornicators, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners. Such were some of the Corinthians, and yet they were washed, sanctified, justified. 1 Cor. vi. 9, 11. O rich and glorious grace! How admirable is the grace of God, in the instance of Manasseh's conversion! who, though a conjurer, a murderer, and one who despised God, and bid defiance to heaven in prosperity, yet when, in adversity, he humbled himself and made supplication to Jehovah, was graciously heard and accepted. 2 Chron. xxxiii. 9, 12, 13. I shall only add the famous instance of Mary Magdalene, who was a notorious sinner. This poor woman loved much, because much was forgiven her; her heart was so melted with a sense of divine goodness, that she could wash our Lord's feet with her tears. Luke vii.

3. The glory of divine grace appears, not only from its author and object, but also from the *season* in which it is

vouchsafed. The Almighty bestows benefits upon his people, at such seasons when they are most suitable. In the mount of difficulty and distress the Lord is seen, yea, he is a very present help in trouble. When sinners have wearied themselves in the greatness of their way, and through a series of disappointments are brought to the last extremity, the blessed God manifests his grace and mercy. And thus when gracious persons are encircled with manifold miseries outward and inward, and their sorrowful hearts are ready to sink into despondency, with a long continued, oppressive weight of woe, from which they can hardly see any way of deliverance; when they are desolate and afflicted, their hearts almost overwhelmed, then Jehovah sends deliverance; "and they are as those that dreamed." Ps. xxv. 16, 17. When the compassionate Jehovah returns to his people, after their sinful wanderings from him, Oh! it makes them admire the pure and glorious riches of divine grace. And truly the Lord teaches his people more and more of this doctrine, namely, the freeness of his grace, while they are in the world.

4. The freeness of divine grace appears likewise from the *manner* in which divine benefits are conferred; e. g., we contribute nothing to the change wrought upon us by conversion. The natural bias of our wills is against it, and this reluctance and opposition remains, until it be overcome by the almighty power of God, who is hence said to make his people "a willing people in the day of his power." Ps. ciii. That alteration of dispositions which is implied in conversion, is not desired by the

sinner before it; though unregenerate sinners desire to be delivered from misery, yet they do not desire to be delivered from sin, the cause of it. For that is as their right eye, and right arm. Well then, seeing those benefits whereby the soul is sanctified are undeserved, undesired, yea, opposed by the unconverted, surely then they must be freely vouchsafed.

5. The riches of divine grace appear from the nature of the benefits conferred, which are attended with these two following properties, viz: freedom from the greatest evils, and a right to, and possession of, the greatest good. Sinners, while in a state of unregeneracy, are immersed in, and exposed to, the greatest evils, both moral and penal. They are under the dominion of sin, and all over tainted by it; and by reason thereof, they are exposed to the curse and wrath of God in this and the next world. They are in a dungeon of darkness and distress, in a pit in which there is no water; bound and shackled with the heavy curse of God, void of light and beauty, and covered with the basest deformity. Now the benefits of divine grace bring the sinner from this depth of woe, loose his shackles, and release him out of prison. Hereby he is freed from the guilt of sin, through the righteousness of Christ imputed to him, and hereby he is freed from the dominion of it, through the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit; and as he is thus freed from the greatest evils by divine grace, so he is thereby entitled to, and made a possessor of, the greatest good, both physical and moral, being made a partaker of the divine love, and

beautified with the divine image, viz: holiness. By the former, he is refreshed, and by the latter adorned. And as he is under the unerring conduct and almighty protection of God here, so he is entitled to the perfect enjoyment of God hereafter; which is the greatest good, that it is possible for a creature to receive. I proceed to the

IV. Proposition, which was to consider what is really and seemingly opposed to the grace of God. Now, the things that are opposed really are these two, viz: *nature* and *merit*. And, 1. *Nature*. Hereby we are children of wrath, "being dead in trespasses and sins." Eph. ii. 1, 3. By nature we have blind minds and stony hearts, neither discern the things that be of God, nor are willing to be subject thereto. "The natural man understands not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. ii. 14. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Rom. viii. 7. Nature, in its present fallen and corrupt state, fights against the grace of God as long as it can; and, therefore, that citadel of man's heart must be taken by storm, if the King of glory takes possession of it. And, 2. The papal doctrine of the *merit of works*, in the business of justification, directly opposes the grace of God. For grace is undue and undeserved love, as was shown before. "We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. If it be of works, it is no more of grace, otherwise work would be no more work, and grace would be no more grace." Rom. iii. 28. But to proceed,

3. The wrath of God is seemingly opposed to grace. Now, the wrath of God is no other than his vindictive justice, or disposition to punish the guilty, which includes three things:

First. A purpose of punishing the transgressor. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." Rom. i. 18.

Secondly. It includes the denunciation of the aforesaid purpose by threatenings. "God is angry with the wicked every day; if he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors." Ps. vii. 11—13.

Thirdly. It includes the execution of the threatenings, by all kinds of revenge and judgments. "Let no man deceive you with vain words, for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience" (Eph. v. 6.); that is, fruits and effects of wrath in divine judgments. Sin wrongs the Almighty by insulting his sovereignty and legislative authority, by contradicting his unspotted holiness, and by slighting the riches of his goodness. By sin God is wronged, and robbed of that tribute of honour and service which is due to him from all created beings, by the strongest claims of right, viz: creation, preservation, provision; and some are under the additional engagement of redeeming love. It is sin, therefore, that stirs up the divine wrath; and because there be various aggravations of sin, therefore,

there are various degrees of wrath excited thereby and proportioned thereto. And hence, the Scriptures, speaking after the manner of men, make mention of God's hot displeasure, fury and rage. Ps. vi. 1. "Therefore, will I also deal in fury; mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet I will not hear them." Ezek. viii. 18. "Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath." Job xl. 11. These expressions do not signify any tumult of passion in God, for he is incapable of passion, being simple, immutable and perfect. They serve, therefore, only to represent the great contrariety of the nature of God to sin, as well as the more dreadful effects of his wrath upon heinous transgressors. But in the meantime, it may be observed, that the wrath of God, in every instance of it, is terrible and irresistible, because it proceeds from an infinite and almighty God. And hence, it is compared to a "burning fire," and to a whirlwind that sweeps all before it. Zeph. i. And except repentance intervene, it will be continual and eternal.

Although the doctrine of free grace has been abused into licentiousness by some sordid spirits, which the apostle Paul mentions with great abhorrence, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid," (Rom.vi. 1, 2,) yet its design and tendency is to promote the contrary. And indeed nothing more powerfully incites an ingenuous mind to holiness than the consideration of God's free and distinguishing grace. And here it is to be noted, that though Almighty God gives his grace freely,

that so no creature should have occasion of boasting or glorying in his presence, yet, ordinarily, he vouchsafes it in the use of appointed means; that so there may be no umbrage for negligence, but, on the contrary, all that excitement to duty, which can consist with the divine sovereignty. These things are excellently represented in the thirty-sixth chapter of Ezekiel, from the twenty-sixth to the thirty-seventh verse. Though the Almighty promises to confer saving benefits, yet he tells them, that for all these things he will be enquired of by them. But it is time to offer a word of improvement. And

1. From what has been said we may learn, that all those doctrines which ascribe any part of our salvation to our endeavours, as meritorious causes thereof, are very derogatory to the glory of God, and the design of his gospel; which is to magnify the exceeding riches of God's grace. Eph. i. Such who seek after righteousness, as it were, by the works of the law, are not like to attain it. Justification is not to be attained by a dependence upon our endeavours, we must come to God as beggars, and ask an alms of free grace, otherwise we shall be rejected.

2. We should examine ourselves, whether we are partakers of God's special grace, in the instances before mentioned, of effectual calling, faith, justification, conversion, adoption; have we by these things been brought, to a high prizing of Christ above all others, to a child-like familiarity with God, to an habitual, holy, humble, heavenly, and loving temper of mind, and course of behaviour? If so, let

us rejoice in Christ Jesus in all outward distresses, let us ever admire the sovereign and distinguishing grace of God, and give to God the glory of it in heart, speech and practice.

But such of you as have not found the aforesaid experiences, rejoice not for joy, as other people, for ye have gone a whoring from God. Let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into heaviness. Cry frequently and earnestly to God for sovereign, saving grace, and rest in no duties or ordinances short of it.

Is the grace of God free? Then the greatest transgressors should not despair of God's mercy; though your iniquities rival the stars for multitude, and in their aggravations are red as crimson and scarlet, yet free grace can easily blot them out, as a thick cloud, and make them white as snow. Therefore let sensible sinners be encouraged to come to, and believe in, the God of grace, for where sin has abounded, there grace has much more abounded. The greater your transgressions are, the greater glory God will get to his grace in forgiving them. The Psalmist was aware of this, and therefore pled with God to pardon his iniquities, because they were exceeding great.

And methinks the doctrine of free grace should powerfully induce us to humility, seeing that it is God only who has made us to differ from others, and that we have nothing but what we have received. We are his debtors for all we have in hand or hope. The nature of grace supposes the object upon whom it is vouchsafed unworthy of it. A

continued, humbling sense of this would as much conduce to our benefit as ornament.

And, seeing the good God is pleased to heap many undeserved kindnesses freely upon us, why should we not imitate his grace by conferring benefits upon our fellow creatures, without any regard to dignity, or hopes of a reward from them? By this we should glorify God, and convince others that we are his children.

In fine, let me, in the name of the gracious God, my Lord and Master, earnestly beseech poor sinners of every order to hasten, as for their lives, to that fountain of grace that is in Christ. Think not to put the Almighty in your debt by your doings, for if grace be not free, it is not grace. Sinners, abuse not the grace of God by delays and other impieties, or expect his inflamed wrath to avenge the ingratitude. "Let the wicked man forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and turn unto God, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

I add no more at present. May the almighty and gracious God bless his word that has been offered in his name to our special and enduring benefit! Amen.

SERMON IV.

THE WISDOM OF GOD IN REDEMPTION.

BY THE REV. GILBERT TENNENT.

"But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."—1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

The apostle observes in the preceding verses, with great beauty and propriety, that, "in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God." The gentile sages, by the mere dint of reason and philosophy, could not form consistent notions of the Supreme Being, or how to obtain his favour. A deluge of the most absurd polytheism and gross profaneness overspread the greatest part of the infidel tribes, before the light of the gospel shone among them; no object was so despicable, as not to be thought worthy of divine honours; no vice so detestable, as not only to obtain in common conversation, but even to be admitted into their religious rites, and most solemn acts of worship; yea, to give sanction to the most brutish and crimson iniquities, they ascribed them to the gods

they adored, as the learned Arnobius observes, with equal justice and elegance.

It is true, the corruption was not so universal, but that some noble souls raised themselves above the common level; they bewailed, and contemned the stupidity and credulity of the multitude, yet their number was small, and the efficacy of their singular sentiments even upon themselves but little; the effect of their discernment was but a state of perpetual scepticism, a floating in doubtful uncertainty between all opinions, discarding what was manifestly wrong, but not fixing their minds in what was good and right. Yea, in matters of moral good and evil, though some of the rules they have left us are truly excellent, yet in many important things they are very deficient; there is a deep silence in their writings of the nature and obliquity of several vices, such as pride, revenge, and self-murder; they are likewise silent about the right principle of action, love to God; the right end of action, the glory of God; the right mode of action, humility and dependence upon God, for light, strength and acceptance.

They were also at a loss respecting the gaining the friendship of the Almighty when offended, the certainty of a future state, and the strict account they must render of all their actions, to the sovereign Lord and Judge of the universe. Are not these things of inexpressible importance, the very governing principles of a Christian's conduct? This melancholy ignorance of the pagan masters was, doubtless, the source of that uncertainty they bewray in their discourses, and such inconsistency in their

lives, concerning which, one of the greatest and best judges among them, viz: Tully, speaks thus, "Do you think," says he, "that these things [meaning the precepts of morality] had any influence upon those men, (except only a very few,) that thought, and wrote, and disputed about them? no; who is there of all the philosophers, whose mind and manners were conformable to right reason? who ever made his philosophy the law and rule of his life, and not a mere boast and show of his wit and parts? who observed his own instructions, and lived in obedience to his own precepts? On the contrary, many of them were slaves to filthy lusts."

Nay, even the things which they themselves knew, they had not authority enough to inculcate upon men's minds with such impression as to influence and govern their conduct; the truths they proved by a train of speculative reasonings were destitute of more sensible authority to enforce them with energy in practice; the precepts they proposed wanted weight, and evidently appeared to be no more than the precepts of men. This was, doubtless, the reason that none of the philosophers were ever able to work any remarkable change in the minds and lives of their hearers; nor does it appear in history that any of the followers of Socrates were ever so convinced by his instructions of the excellency of virtue, and the certainty and value of its final reward, as to be willing to lay down their lives for its sake, as innumerable disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ have done, with the greatest gladness and heroic fortitude. The truth is, the philosophers them-

selves were sensible of the defect of their own rules in this particular, and, therefore, confess that human nature was strangely corrupted, and that this corruption was a disease whose cause they knew not, and for which they could not find a sufficient remedy. So that the great duties of religion and virtue were proposed by them as matters of speculation, rather than rules of practice: not so much urged upon men's hearts and lives, as proposed to their admiration.

This was, apparently, the condition of mankind without a revelation; to recover them out of which degeneracy, into a state suitable to the original excellency of their nature, a supernatural discovery of their duty was plainly necessary; for if, as has been observed, the generality of the world were so ignorant and corrupt, so overrun with idolatry and licentiousness; if the best of the philosophers were not exempt from the general infection, and free from uncertainty respecting the doctrines they pretended to advance; if the points wherein they were certain, they were not able to prove clearly to vulgar understandings, and those they were able to prove, they had not sufficient authority to enforce; in a word, if there was so much inconsistency in themselves as to give scandal to others, and so much depravity in others as to make them despair of reforming them, there was, then, plainly a want of some revelation to supply these defects, and to discover in what manner, and with what kind of external service, the blessed God might be acceptably worshipped; a revelation to discover what expiation he would be pleased to accept of for

sin, by which his honour is affronted and his authority opposed; a revelation to give intelligent beings an assurance of the great motives of religion, the rewards and punishments of a future state. In fine, some particular revelation was necessary to make the whole system of Christian doctrine clear and obvious to all capacities, to add weight and authority to the plainest precepts, and to furnish men with extraordinary assistance to enable them to overcome the corruptions of their nature; and, indeed, without the assistance of such a revelation, the wisest of men were always of opinion that the world could never be reformed. "Ye may even give over," says Socrates, "all hopes of amending men's manners for the future, unless God be pleased to send some other person to instruct you; for whatsoever is set right, says Plato, in the present ill state of the world, can only be done by the interposition of God."

This condescending and gracious interposure appears evidently in the Christian system, the plan of salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ, which, though it be despised by the ignorant, inconsiderate and prejudiced, is, by those that are awakened out of their security and divinely illuminated, experienced to be, indeed and in truth, a glorious display of the power of God, and the wisdom of God; the latter of which, let us for a little space fix our attention upon at present.

The blessed God, my brethren, foreseeing man's fall, and the misery consequent upon it, determined his recovery in a way worthy of himself, and suited to the

circumstances of the apostate creature, in which his wisdom is eminently conspicuous. This will appear by considering the end that God proposed, and the means he concerted to compass it. All intelligent agents first propose an end, and then choose the means that tend to obtain it; now the more perfect the understanding is, the more noble is the end it designs, and the more apt the means it prescribes to acquire it. The end proposed by the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is most excellent, viz: the glory of God, and the happiness of mankind, or their restoration to his image and favour.

The glory of God, or the manifestation of his attributes, by their exercise, to the moral world, was his supreme scope; as God is the best of beings, of consequence his glory must be the best end, and therefore it is but reasonable he should aim at it in all his works; and hence he is said to have made all things for himself, and that of him, and through him, and to him are all things: seeing he is the Creator and Lord of all, it is but just and right that he should be the end of all; nothing can be more natural than that what was borrowed from him, should be directed to him or his honour; "the heavens" are, therefore, said to "declare the glory of God, and the firmament to show forth his handy-work:" on this account, the revelation of the way to future happiness, by the dear, dear Lord Jesus Christ, is called "the glorious gospel of the blessed God;" because it is the clearest manifestation, the richest display of the transcendent excellency of his adorable attributes, which was ever given to the children of men: and hence

Jehovah is said to "magnify his word (that is, the word of his grace) above all his name." The apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Corinthians, assures us, that the "ministration of righteousness exceeds in glory;" and that under this dispensation, "we all with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." In the gospel we behold the Lord Jesus Christ, and the harmonious manifestation of the divine attributes in the scheme of salvation through him, not under the dark veil of types, shadows and prophecies, as the Jewish church, but with open face as in a glass, and are thereby gradually transformed into his image, through the Holy Spirit's concurring influence.

To the aforesaid manifestation of the divine attributes, which the Almighty proposed as his supreme end, we must add the praise and thanksgiving of reasonable creatures on account thereof. When intelligent beings acknowledge the displays of God's excellencies with adoring reverence and ardent affection, they glorify him; "he that offereth praise, glorifieth me," saith the Almighty by the Psalmist; and this, undoubtedly, the blessed God had likewise in view as his supreme end.

But the subordinate end in redemption is the restoration of man; and this, indeed, is inseparably connected with the former, as appears from the angels' anthem, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will towards men." Sin had broken the sacred alliance between God and man, and exposed man to the divine displeasure, an

inexpressible and incomprehensible misery. Now, what is more becoming the Father of mercies, the God of love, than to compassionate and relieve the miserable—than to raise from the depths of ruin many monuments, in which his kindness and benignity might for ever triumph? To compass these truly valuable ends, divine wisdom projected the aptest means possible, which appears in the following easy light.

The misery of apostate man consists in the depravation of his whole nature by sin, and in his exposedness to the divine displeasure on account of it, which was a just and natural consequent of his crimson apostasy; and his happiness consisted in his restoring him to his original purity and fellowship with God, and to the full enjoyment of him. But the way to effect this, in consistency with the divine justice, law and government, was a depth which no human understanding could fathom. That God whose being is love, should show kindness to the angels, who never swerved from his statutes, is easy to imagine; for though they cannot merit his favour, yet they never incurred his displeasure by malconduct: and it must needs be natural to Jehovah to love the image of his purity wherever it appears.

Nor is it hard to conceive that the Almighty would be inclined to succour an innocent creature in misery; for in this case, there would be nothing to obstruct the free effluxes of his unexhausted goodness; but how to save a creature that is as guilty as miserable, by its own criminal choice, is a difficulty too hard to be solved by the wisdom

of men or of angels. Heaven itself seemed to be divided on this occasion; mercy inclined to save, but justice interposed for satisfaction. Mercy regarded man with respect to his misery, and its pleas were such as these: Shall the most excellent creature in the lower world perish, the fault not being entirely his—perish for ever without any favour? Shall no compassion be shown to miserable mankind, who in their original state were the beauty and crown of all the numerous ranks of beings in this inferior system? Shall the malignant enemy forever triumph in the fatal success of his perfidy, and reduce the whole human race to the most deplorable and remediless ruin? On the other hand, justice, the nature of which is to give to every one his due, considered man as guilty of a most ungrateful, murderous and pregnant iniquity, the wages of which, agreeable to the dictates of reason and the law of God, is death: this divine attribute remonstrates against showing favour to the unhappy delinquents, and queries, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" All the other attributes seemed to be attendants on justice.

The wisdom of God enforced its plea; it being most indecent, that sin, which demerits the execution, should procure the abrogation, of the law, which would encourage the commission of it without fear. The majesty of God was likewise concerned; for it was not becoming excellent greatness and absolute sovereignty, to treat in this humble manner with inferiors and delinquents, and to offer pardon to presumptuous, ungrateful rebels, before they bow at his footstool, and make supplication to their judge.

The holiness of God confirms and corroborates incensed, lesed majesty, and urges justice to execute the threatening annexed to the violation of the law; for "Jehovah is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." As purity is the essential object of his complacential will, which he loves immutably wherever it is, so, by the law of contraries, sin is the eternal object of his hatred, and consequently such as are (with their full consent) under its habitual rule and government. Because of their connection with it, he will not, saith Job, take the wicked by the hand, or at all acquit them, as the prophet Nahum expresses it. Purity and pollution, by reason of their contrary natures, cannot mix or coalesce, but must maintain a perpetual jar and discord, till one or other is destroyed. Further,

The truth of God, being plighted in the covenant of works, stands engaged to see to the execution of the penalty denounced in case of trespass; and if it is not, the matter so requiring, divine truth fails; but that is impossible, and the attribute joins issue in the contest with divine justice, wisdom, majesty and purity, and requires the execution of the threatened punishment upon the offender himself; or, if extraordinarily dispensed with (in this respect), it must be on such terms as the honour of God's truth may be preserved inviolate.

This seeming conflict among the divine attributes, no created understanding could adjust, and find out a way to reconcile infinite mercy with inflexible justice; a way to satisfy the demands of the one, and grant the requests of the other. In this exigency divine wisdom interposed, and

in its unsearchable depths cherished an expedient, to save man without any prejudice to the perfections of the Deity, without any injury to his government over the moral world, by constituting a mediator between the guilty creature and himself, that, by transferring the punishment on the surety, sin might be punished, and the sinner saved. Here mercy and justice salute each other, and shine with equal glory and lustre. The latter is fully satisfied, and the former exceedingly magnified. These amiable attributes, in this mediatorial plan, join in friendly harmony, to promote and secure the penitent and believing sinner's perpetual happiness. Nor is it unbecoming the majesty of God, to accept a returning sinner, when a mediator of infinite dignity intercedes for him.

The purity of God is not in the least degree disparaged by his clemency to transgressors, seeing the blessed Mediator is a principle and pattern of holiness to all that believe in him, and the truth of God, engaged to issue the threatenings of the broken law, is, by the sufferings of the sinner's surety, preserved inviolate. So that all the divine perfections concur herein, and express, to the eternal astonishment and delight of men and angels, inexpressible charms, beauty and magnificence. Here we may see the glory of the blessed God shining in the face of the venerable and dear Lord Jesus Christ. Who can fathom the unsearchable depths of this amazing wisdom? Who can unfold the boundless riches and treasures of this mysterious prodigy and miracle of mercy—this inexpressible, transcendent, incomprehensible and glorious grace and love?

Surely, no understanding, either human or angelical, is equal to this province; it is only the same infinite mind that concerted this illustrious scheme of salvation by a Redeemer, that can comprehend it.

The angels, those great ministers that attend the throne of God, stoop down with the deepest attention, the strongest desire, and noblest pleasure, to behold the rich and unsearchable variety of manifold wisdom and glorious grace that is herein contained. But though we cannot comprehend the depths of redeeming goodness, yet we may apprehend so much as to be thereby powerfully influenced to admiration, love and obedience; so much as to be thereby excited to cry out in the apostle's language, "O the depths of the riches, both of the knowledge and wisdom of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Surely, the "love of Christ passeth knowledge." But, more particularly,

The wisdom of God appears eminently in taking occasion from the sin of our progenitor, to bring a greater tribute of honour to God, and greater benefit to man, than if he had never transgressed. Sin naturally tends to God's dishonour and to the creature's ruin; but, contrary to its natural tendency, it is overruled by a wise providence to be the occasion of the greatest glory to God and good to man; so that "out of the eater comes forth meat, and out of the strong, sweetness;" as a medicine is extracted out of a poison by the alembic; or as the black ground in a picture, though in itself it contaminates, yet when fixed, with judgment, in its proper place as a shade, heightens

the lustre of the brightest colours, and adds to the beauty of the whole piece.

Dear sirs, the glory of God is more illustriously apparent, in the recovery of fallen man, than if he had never sinned. Had Adam persevered inviolably in his duty and allegiance to his great Creator and Sovereign, he could only have been the subject of divine goodness, but not in its highest and most endearing acts, which are to pity and succour the guilty and miserable. Had he transgressed, and redemption not have taken place, justice, it is true, would have been honoured with a solemn sacrifice, a solemn triumph; but mercy, that amiable, benign, and indulgent attribute, would have been veiled with a total eclipse. But now the wisdom of Jehovah in the redemption of man appears, by according these attributes, and making them shine with rival charms. The honour of Jehovah appears as much in preserving the authority of his law, by punishing our surety in our room and place, as by the exercise of his mercy in pardoning the transgressor.

Nor is it less honourable, my brethren, to the divine wisdom, to restore fallen man with infinite advantage: though innocent man was holy, yet sad experience verifies, that he was mutably so; but holiness in the redeemed shall be perpetual, eternal. Adam's stock was in his own hand, and hence he became a bankrupt; but ours is in the hands of an almighty surety, who has undertaken for us, and will be faithful to his trust. Justice itself being satisfied becomes our friend, and ascertains our possession

of paradise. I might add, that there are graces to be acted by us in our fallen state, for which there were no objects or occasions in innocence: such as compassion to the miserable, forgiveness of injuries, and patience; all which, being emblems of the divine perfections, must, of consequence, be ornamental to, and perfective of, our immortal souls, in conforming them to the great pattern and original of beauty and excellency.

Again, the wisdom of God appears in appointing such a mediator as is suitably qualified to reconcile God to man, and man to God; a mediator, that is God and man in one person, and therefore capable of the affections and sentiments of both the parties to be reconciled. The wisdom of the divine constitution in appointing a person to mediate, who is possessed of the divine and human natures, appears more particularly from the three offices he exercises in that character, viz: Prophetical, Priestly, and Kingly.

Considered as a Prophet, it was necessary that the mediator should be God, that he might deliver instructions with more authority and efficacy; it is God alone that can enlighten the mind, convince the conscience, teach, and change the heart. And it was likewise necessary, that he should be man, that he might converse with us, and convey his instructions to us, in such a familiar way, as we could receive. Such is the weakness of our present frame, that the majesty of God's appearance occasions a distressing panic, and, hence, when Israel had seen some glimpses of God's glory and majesty, at the giving of the

law, they besought the Lord to speak no more to them, in such a manner, lest they died. And no doubt guilt increases our dread at the approach of God, and therefore renders us unfit to attend with due calmness to his immediate instructions. An instance of this we have in the prophet, who, when he heard the seraphs shout, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the heavens and earth are full of the majesty of his glory," lamented in this mournful language, "Woe is me, I am undone, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." Infinite purity, attended with awful majesty, so alarms our fears, as to render us unfit for instruction; but the Son of God appearing in our nature to make atonement for transgressors, the brightness of his divine majesty being veiled with the mantle of his humanity is thereby allayed, and so more accommodated to our present state of weakness. Hereby we are encouraged to draw near to him, and to hear with composure his gentle instructions, which drop as the rain, and distil as the dew upon the tender herb.

Nor was the union of the divine and human natures in the person of the Mediator less necessary, my brethren, in respect of his Priestly office. He must be man, that the sinning nature might suffer, and thereby acquire a right to the satisfaction made; for our title to the benefits of Christ's sufferings depends upon our union to him, which is not only spiritual by faith, but natural also; for, as the apostle observes, "He who sanctifies, and they who are sanctified, are all one;" *i. e.*, they have communion in the same nature. Inasmuch as suffering, according to the

divine declaration, was necessary to atone for sin, of which the Deity is incapable, it behoved our High Priest to be man, that he might have a capacity for it; and that those sufferings might be of sufficient dignity and value, and the human nature supported under them, it was as necessary he should be God.

Nor was it less needful that the Mediator should partake of both natures, in order to intercede for us as a Priest; that so he might have a sufficient interest in his Father's affection to prevail in his suit for us, and, at the same time, be possessed of tender affections towards us. Being the Son of God, him the Father always hears, and being the Son of man, he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities; we have, therefore, encouragement to come with boldness to the throne of his grace to obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

And is it not also requisite that the Mediator should be God and man, in regard to his Kingly office? For unless he be God, how can he apply the fruits of his death to us, dispossess the strong man armed, and subdue us to the obedience of faith? And if he had not been man, how could he have led us into the way of universal holiness, by the influence of his own example, which is, doubtless, an excellent method to reform mankind? It is not only necessary to enact rules of virtue by a kingly authority, but likewise, by example, to make precepts practicable and honourable. When brave generals, though of the noblest lineage, design to animate their armies to heroic achievements, they voluntarily submit their persons to all the

humble offices and hardships of a state of war, courageously lead their troops into the high places of the field of battle, and expose their lives to the greatest perils. This our Lord has done for us; the Captain of our salvation, the King of the church, and Lord of the universe, has been made perfect through sufferings.

Another instance of divine wisdom in the redemption of man, by the Lord Jesus Christ, is in making the remedy to have some analogy and proportion to the cause of our ruin; *i. e.*, as we fell in the first Adam, considered as our representative, so we are raised by the second, considered in the same character: "as by the disobedience of one, many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one, many are made righteous." As guilt and death came by the first, through imputation to all his natural offspring, that are united to him naturally by existence, so righteousness and life came by the second Adam, through imputation to all his spiritual offspring, that are united to him spiritually by faith.

Moreover, my brethren, divine wisdom is conspicuous in the manner whereby our redemption is accomplished, viz: by the humiliation of the Son of God; by this, Jehovah, as it were, counterworks the sin of angels and men. Pride is the malignity of every sin, for, by it, the sinner sets up his will against God. Now that our dear Redeemer might cure the disease we labour under, in its original source, by the nature of the remedy, he applied to our arrogance, humility. Man, who is but a worm and crushed before the moth, was vainly and wickedly guilty

of high treason, in affecting to be like God: and thus he fell from the state of happiness in which he was at first created. And the eternal Son of God, who was in the form of God, and counted it not robbery to be equal with God, stooped to assume the humble form of a servant, that by his sufferings he might restore fallen man to his primitive purity and bliss: and by his example correct that arrogance, which was the fountain of his final apostasy, and all its unhappy consequences. "The word was made flesh," to banish the distance between God and us. O stupendous abasement! the condescension of divine majesty herein is equal to the contrivance of divine wisdom. Both are indeed incomprehensible, both inexpressible. So dreadful was the malignity of our native arrogance, that such unparalleled, astonishing abasement, even of God himself, was necessary to its cure. By this, our Lord destroyed the first work of our grand enemy.

Further, the wisdom of God in connexion with almightiness appears in appointing such contemptible, and, to appearance, contrary means, to accomplish such great and glorious effects. The way is as wonderful as the work: that Christ, by dying on the cross, a reputed malefactor, should be made our eternal righteousness: that by death he should destroy him that had the power of death and purchase our life: that, by descending into the grave, he should purchase our resurrection from it, and immortal blessedness.—is truly amazing, and plainly shows that the thoughts and ways of God are far above ours, as the heavens are above the earth. Strange that immortal

life should spring from death, honour from ignominy, healing from stripes, blessedness from a curse! This is so contrary to the usual course of things, that to render it credible, it was typified by many symbols, and foretold by many prophets before it came to pass, that, when it came, it might be esteemed an effect of God's eternal counsel, almighty power, and unsearchable wisdom. Though Christ crucified be to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness, yet to those that are called, he is the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Surely great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh; whatever our modern exalters of carnal reason, and monopolizers of wisdom, mutter to the contrary notwithstanding. These men say they are Christians, and yet with a show of wisdom, and pretext of friendship to Jesus Christ, they presume to confront the express testimony of his inspired apostles; they labour with art and address to rob his religion of its grand peculiars, and to substitute polished paganism in its place, and would have us to believe the jest, the juggle, that there is no material difference between them. But God forbid! we have not so learned Christ; while they profess themselves to be wise, they commence fools, they become vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts are darkened: "for in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God; it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save those that believe:" *i. e.*, the great Sovereign and Lord of all, who has a right to do with his own as he pleases, has, of his mere motion, so ordered the matter, that by the

humble preaching of the cross of Christ, or, in other words, the mediatorial plan of salvation, by the sufferings and death of the Son of God (which some stumble at, and reckon inconsistent and foolish), those that believe shall obtain eternal happiness. Such who reckon the grand peculiars of the religion of Jesus foolish and absurd, would act a more candid and consistent part, if they renounced the name of Christianity altogether, (for what signifies the name without the thing?) and openly declared that they reject the Bible, as a sure and sufficient guide to heaven, and betake themselves to their Dagons, viz: their carnal reason, and graceless virtue,—to a dependence on the former as their supreme and sufficient guide in the matters of religion, and on the latter as their only Saviour. "My soul, come not into their secret; to their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united." Let Jewish, Grecian, and British infidels or pagans, (the most inexcusable of all the rest, who in the midst of light and day grope in Egyptian darkness,) in the pride and stoutness of their hearts deride and burlesque the mysterious and humble doctrines of Christ crucified, as a nonsensical scheme; yet they never will be able, by all their art, their eloquence, and sovereign contempt, to drive those that have experienced a gracious change (a divine birth) from the foundation of their hope. No, such have an inward witness, that "Christ crucified is the wisdom of God, and the power of God;" and in every successive period, till time concludes its drama, there will be such, who shall not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ, but glory in his cross, as a badge of honour; for "the

foundation of God stands sure." Jehovah has graciously promised, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against his church, and that no weapon formed against her shall prosper. But to proceed:

The divine wisdom, my brethren, appears gloriously in forming the plan of the gospel, in such a manner, as at once to provide for the comfort of men's souls, and promote the purity of their manners. And this, indeed, is an inseparable character of divine doctrines, that they equally tend to promote God's glory and our benefit. Thus, as the way to blessedness by a mediator, effectually secures God's honour, so it powerfully incites the sinner's hope, love and joy, by representing the blessed God as amiable, benign, and gracious, by providing a complete satisfaction to injured justice, that thus a way might be opened for a liberal, consistent and honourable effusion of divine goodness, in all its innumerable instances, in all its various and valuable effects, adapted to every changing scene of life, adapted to every circumstance of the indigent and distressed; and sufficient to support, relieve, yea, refresh and content them, in the midst of miseries and woes; and under a train and complication of the greatest calamities, which this Bochim, this state of exile, affords. These primitive and faithful servants of Christ, the apostles, though they were by many reckoned deceivers, yet they were true; though they had nothing, yet they possessed all things; though they were sorrowful, yet they were always rejoicing. The mediatorial plan shows us how "God may be just, and yet the justifier of him that

believeth in Jesus," because of his propitiation. This opens to our view the unspeakable gift of the Son of God, and assures us of the gift of all things with him, in case we believe; in particular, this fixes our final perseverance in goodness, a crowning mercy, upon the impregnable basis of the immutable purpose, the almighty power, and faithful promise of God; upon the sacred suretyship, the complete satisfaction, and perpetual intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ; and therefore this gospel scheme of grace and salvation opens an unfailing spring of joy, and lays a firm foundation for our hope and trust; this calms the guilty, restless mind, and makes it "rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

And as the gospel of Christ provides for our solace, so it incites to universal purity. Do not the sufferings of the Son of God for sin give us a dreadful representation of its malignity and danger, seeing nothing less could make a satisfaction for it, and, therefore, serve to deter us from it? We may judge of the danger of a disease by the difficulty of its cure; nothing less could heal our mortal malady than the blood of God; and seeing Christ has expressed such amazing love to us, does not this tend to beget love in us to him, and to constrain us to a voluntary, sincere and uniform obedience, from that truly noble principle?

Now, if the gospel of Christ be such as has been described, with what ardour should we celebrate the divine praises for this revelation, so worthy of God, so suited to the case of fallen man? The apostasy of our first parents was so

fatal to us, that nothing less than infinite wisdom could find out a sufficient remedy. There is no discovery of this in the works of creation. The heavens and the earth do, indeed, prove the existence of a Supreme Being, by pointing to some of his adorable attributes; but cannot represent the design of redemption, which has no connection with the existence of creatures, but hangs altogether upon the sovereign pleasure of God. The doctrine of the Trinity, which is the foundation of the mediatorial plan of salvation, cannot be known by the frame of the universe.

Nor can natural reason, by its utmost force, attain to the knowledge of redeeming grace and love. It is true, there are some remains of the law of nature in the heart of man, some common notices (rudera, vestigia) of the differences between moral good and evil, otherwise the world would soon disband and turn into the wildest anarchy, the rudest chaos, and become an Aceldama. Though misery when felt, excites to look out for a remedy, yet, here reason is at a loss, at a plunge, and quite non-plussed. How could the Israelites imagine, that by looking to the brazen serpent, those that were stung should be healed? And how can a poor creature discover, by the mere dint of his own genius, or light within, the satisfaction of divine justice by Jesus Christ? No, they cannot, and hence it is called a "mystery, hid from ages and generations;" nay, though the human mind had never been corrupted, it could not, by the force of its reasonings, find it out; for this the very angels could not discover, till it was made known to them by the church. By the first coming

of Christ, and the conversion of many to him, the depths of divine wisdom were unveiled.

The apostle informs us, that the case of the Gentiles was extremely dangerous: "their understandings were darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts." The apostle Paul declares, that the Ephesians were formerly darkness, *i. e.* while pagans; and elsewhere assures us that "the natural man does not understand the things of the Spirit of God;" that they are foolishness to him, and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned; and this was not only the case with the ruder sort, but of the more polite and learned; for, as has been before observed, "the world by wisdom knew not God." Natural reason cannot inform us whether God will pardon any transgressors at all, or not, or upon what terms. It is true, the modern Deists do now trump up a plausible scheme of natural religion, with design to overset revealed, but are not so candid as to inform us that they borrowed their lessons from the Bible; without the assistance of which, notwithstanding their pride and pretence to penetration (or superior acumen), they would speak as darkly, doubtingly, and confusedly, as their more ingenious and ingenuous forefathers, the pagan philosophers, long since.

What a horrid confusion of sentiments, what a rude, wild, and dark chaos, overwhelmed the pagan world before Christ's coming, in respect of the most important points of religion! Varro declares, that there were, among them, no less than three hundred different opinions about the

chief good; nor did they inculcate internal purity, and the necessity of forgiving injuries; and the best of them offered but uncertain conjectures about the immortality of the soul. A view of their miseries may justly heighten our value for the mercies we enjoy. While many nations dwell in darkness, and in the shadow of death, the day-spring from on high has visited us, and the Sun of righteousness arisen with healing under his wings upon us. This distinguishing, important, and unmerited benefit should fire our souls with love and gratitude, and stir us up to the most affectionate thanksgiving. It is the prerogative of God to reveal the secrets of his kingdom to whom he pleases; how, then, can we reflect upon the divine goodness towards us, without the warmest emotion, the most admiring, grateful sentiments? Surely, by nature we are as blind, corrupt, and perverse as any other nation; what are we, then, that God should be so gracious to us? If the publication of the law to the people of Israel was justly reckoned their peculiar treasure, what, then, is the revelation of the gospel by the Son of God, which alone discovers our remedy, and of which there is no innate notice in human nature, nor any given otherwise universally.

Can this principle be easily justified, that there is something in mankind, which, if attended to, is sufficient to direct man to salvation without the Scriptures? It is no matter what this something be called, whether reason, conscience, or the light within, seeing the substance intended is the same. Do not the Scriptures positively declare

that there is no name given under heaven, by which salvation can be obtained, but the name of Jesus; that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God; that we cannot hear without a preacher; that the heathen are darkness, without the covenants of promise, without God; that they perish for lack of vision, and that all the unregenerate before conviction are blind, dead, possessed with Satan; that the light in some is darkness, and that all men have not faith? Now, how can the aforesaid principles agree with those declarations?

And do not millions of facts (which are stubborn things) in the pagan world, in the present and past ages, and in various nations, confirm the aforesaid testimony of Scripture, that the pagans, whatever pains they take in their different ways of religion (unless they obtain some information from the sacred Scriptures), remain ignorant of the way of salvation by Christ? If the pagans had this knowledge, is it reasonable to think that they would be brought to the profession of what they believe with great difficulty, in places where this profession is not attended with any danger? And yet this has often been the case, and is so still; and why have so many opposed, with great vehemence, and without any sense of guilt, the profession of Christianity, (with Saul before his conversion,) if it be so universally known as is supposed? And why do none, among such vast multitudes, and during so many ages, give any account of this matter?

Further, is not one design of the sacred scriptures for "doctrine and instruction," "to make the man of God

perfect and thoroughly furnished to every good work;" now what need is there of this, if there be sufficient light in every man to direct him without it? Is it not absurd to say, we need more than what is sufficient, or that we need more than we need? Is not the Bible, therefore, needless and superfluous, according to this principle? And is this principle safe, that, in its consequences, deprives us of our Bible? Pray is not the business of pastors after God's heart, to feed the people with knowledge and understanding? And is it not the design of their office to turn sinners from darkness to light? But what need is there of this institution at all, what need of any labours to instruct mankind, if men have sufficient light without it in themselves? Is not preaching at any time or place, on this plan, an absurdity, a mere farce? And why did the apostles take so much pains in travelling and preaching? Why did they run such risks and endure such hardships? Was it to do a superfluous business, to teach people what they knew already, or might know without their assistance? If so, was this prudent in them (seeing they carried on no business of merchandize, or traffic in their travels to enrich themselves), or a good argument that they had the full exercise of their reason? Pray did they suffer stripes, imprisonment, or death, like wise men or fools, for doing what was needless? Judge ye.

Upon this hypothesis, is it probable that we shall be duly sensible of the value of our religious privileges, sincerely thankful for them, tenderly concerned for those that want them, and use diligence to proselyte them to Christianity, when we judge that they are unnecessary?

But to proceed, is not the incomprehensible mystery of redeeming wisdom and grace, well worthy of our serious thoughts and study; seeing it excels all other sciences in the sublimity of its object, the certainty of its principle, the efficacy of its influence, and the value of its end? It is a doctrine that affects the soul with the highest admiration of the divine wisdom, love, and grace, and makes us speak in the Psalmist's language, "How wonderful are thy thoughts to us-ward!" When the Almighty hereby turns our captivity, we are as those that dream. This opens before us the grandest theme, that was ever exposed to mortal eye or ear; a complication of wonders, the chief of all the ways of God; strange that He who fills heaven and earth, should be confined in a virgin's womb —that life should die and, being dead, revive—that mercy should triumph, without infringing on the rights of justice!

The principle of this mysterious doctrine is immutable, like God, the author and object of it; whereas, philosophical sciences are frequently shifting; almost every one, through pride and excessive self-love, is disposed to despise and pull down what another, with much labour, builds up.

And how precious and powerful is the influence of this doctrine upon those that believingly receive it! While they behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, they are transformed into the same image from glory to glory—this is eternal life, to know God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent. O! let us cry earnestly to God, that Christ crucified may be more and more the wisdom of God, and the power of God to us! Amen, amen. Dear Lord Jesus Christ, say Amen.

SAMUEL BLAIR.

The Rev. Samuel Blair was a native of Ireland, but came early to this country, and received his education in the Log College, under Mr. William Tennent, Sen. He must have been among the first pupils of this institution. After finishing his classical and theological studies, Mr. Blair put himself under the care of the New Castle Presbytery, by which body he was in due time licensed to preach the gospel. Soon after his licensure, he was settled in the Presbyterian Congregation at Shrewsbury, in New Jersey, in 1734. He laboured in this field for five or six years, when he received an earnest call to settle in New Londonderry, otherwise called Faggs Manor, in the State of Pennsylvania. Here he instituted a classical school, similar in its purpose to that of Mr. Tennent, in Neshaminy, in which some of the ablest ministers of the Presbyterian Church received either the whole, or the more substantial parts of their education.

There are no records extant, from which we can learn any particulars respecting the fruits of Mr. Blair's labours, at Shrewsbury. Here he commenced his ministerial work; and, as he was a faithful, able and zealous preacher of the truth as it is in Jesus, we entertain no doubt that some of the good seed which he sowed, fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit.

Under his ministry at New Londonderry, there occurred a very remarkable revival of religion, of which he wrote a particular narrative.

The congregation at Faggs Manor consisted almost entirely of emigrants from the north of Ireland; and had been formed a num-

ber of years, but had never enjoyed the ministry of a stated pastor. His settlement among them took place in November, 1739; although he was not installed as their pastor until the month of April, 1740.

Mr. Blair was one of the most learned and profound, as well as pious, excellent, and venerable men of his day. His deep and clear views as a theologian, are sufficiently evident from his treatise on "Predestination," where this awful and mysterious doctrine is treated with the hand of a master. As a preacher, Mr. Blair was very eminent. There was a solemnity in his very appearance, which struck his hearers with awe, before he opened his mouth. And his manner of preaching, while it was truly evangelical and instructive, was exceedingly impressive—he spoke as in the view of eternity, as in the immediate presence of God.

He contracted the disease of which he died, by exposure in attending upon a meeting of the Trustees of the College of New Jersey. His last words, a minute or two before his departure, were, "The Bridegroom is come, and we shall now have all things." And thus, under a gleam of heaven, he breathed out his last. Though his life was protracted beyond the age attained by Davies and Brainerd, yet he may be said to have died young; for, from the inscription on his tomb, it appears that he was only thirty-nine years and twenty one days old, when he was taken away.

TREATISE

ON THE DOCTRINE OF PREDESTINATION.

BY THE REV. SAMUEL BLAIR.

In order to speak clearly and to advantage upon any subject, and especially, if it be much controverted in the world, it is, in the first place, necessary that it be exactly defined and bounded by its proper limits; that it be represented properly, as it is maintained by those who contend for it, that so both parties may have the same fixed, determinate idea of what they reason about, and speak both still to the self same thing. Endless are the confusions and contentions that are introduced into the world, either for the want of this care in defining and rightly understanding the subject in debate, or for want of honesty in an opponent, when he will not keep close to the very thing, though he doth understand what it is. It is the readiest way to bring out controversy to a right issue, rightly to state and represent the case, and then to keep close to it, as so stated, and not suffer another thing, under the same name, to be shuffled in in its place, through the course of the argument. In this way, such objections, as suppose the case to be different from what it is, are easily answered

by reducing the objector to the prefixed limits, and so showing his argument to be nothing to the purpose in hand. And I think there is nowhere more need of this care and attention, than about the doctrine of God's Decrees or Predestination, which is the subject of this small treatise. I know not any doctrine more furiously opposed, without being rightly understood, or by being disingenuously and uncandidly misrepresented. I shall, therefore, first of all, state the doctrine truly, and then defend and confirm it.

I. As to the true state of the doctrine, it may be taken up in these two or three propositions:

1. That as God, from everlasting, was pleased in his own free sovereignty to decree and to determine to create this world, and to make man in it, a reasonable creature, in his own image, holy and upright, every way fitted and impowered for that duty which was due from such a rational creature to the great God Creator, with full ability to preserve and continue in that happy state of integrity; and to enter into a covenant of life with him, wherein all the human race were to be concerned and engaged; and, Adam, their first father, constituted their public head and representative; so that, as he kept or broke the covenant, they were to enjoy or lose the promised blessings of it; and as God infallibly foreknew the fall and transgression of Adam, as what he had decreed to permit, and so the depravity and ruin of his posterity consequent thereupon, according to the covenant, with all the actual sins which every individual should ever be guilty of; so he was likewise pleased, of his own mere grace and free favour, to de-

cree and determine to recover and save a number, only known to himself, of that fallen, wretched race, through the mediation of his own Son's redeeming them, by answering the precept and penalty of the broken law for them; and through the sanctification of his eternal Spirit making them fit for, and capable of, glorifying and enjoying him for ever.

2. That God's determining and appointing to save any of fallen mankind, or any in particular more than others, was not upon the foresight of any difference which he foresaw they would make among themselves, by the better improvement of any common helps and advantages, as the reason of it; but it was purely of his own sovereign, free, wise pleasure, and distinguishing grace.

3. The rest of fallen mankind, not thus chosen and ordained to eternal life, he was pleased of his sovereign, wise and righteous pleasure, as a just king and lawgiver, to determine to leave in their fallen state, and punish them according to all the sin and disobedience which they should be guilty of, and chargeable with.

This is, briefly, a just view of the case I am upon; which, I hope, with the divine direction and conduct, to maintain against all the arguments commonly opposed to the doctrine. I cannot, indeed, expect that this representation of it will render it generally acceptable and agreeable to those who have been long prejudiced against it; but that is not the question, whether we would incline or desire to have it so; but, whether it be truly and really so, whether we would desire to have it so, or not. Many

of the laws and commands of God are very contrary to the will and inclination of depraved sinners; but they are not the less truly the commands of God for that. In the defence of this doctrine, I would first show, that it is a reasonable, and next, that it is a scriptural doctrine; and speak to the arguments which may be urged both for and against it, from both these topics, of reason and revelation.

II. Those who oppose the doctrine of absolute decrees, generally bring in a heavy indictment against it, as big with the most glaring absurdities, inconsistencies, and contradictions to the very light of reason; and these, such as involve in them the grossest impiety, and most horrid blasphemy against the Divine Majesty: as, that it is directly contrary to, and necessarily infers the exact reverse of most of, the glorious perfections and attributes which reason as well as scripture teaches us to ascribe to the great God; that it makes him unjust, and tyrannically cruel; some say, I dread to express it, worse than the very devil; that it makes him the author of sin, chargeable with most, if not all the guilt of it; that it makes him a most gross, hypocritical dissembler, &c. But, sure, it is not the proper Calvinistic doctrine upon that head, that these men bring in all these awful and shocking charges against; but some horrid composition of their own brain, which they will palm upon the Calvinists, whether they will or no: or else, they just resolve to bring a popular odium upon the doctrine, by such vile, bold, and daring methods; to impose upon such as are not well capable to reason clearly or closely upon such a sublime subject, that

they may abhor the very thoughts of it. I readily own, that whatsoever notion infers any the least imperfection in God, is unreasonable, and worse than false. But let the account I have given of this doctrine, be but duly and unbiassedly considered; and then tell me, if there is any thing so dishonourable to God, or unreasonable in it; if there is, in which of the three propositions, or articles, is it? Is it in the first, when it is said, that God decreed to permit Adam's fall? But you must own that he did permit it: that is, that he did not prevent it, if you own that Adam did fall; and consequently, you must own that God decreed to permit or suffer him to fall; for it is highly absurd to say, that he did permit it without determining to permit it; that is the same thing as to say that he took no notice of it at all, till it was done; that it never once came under the view of his all-comprehending, all-discerning mind, how Adam would behave himself in such circumstances as he was in, when he did transgress, if left merely to his own use of his original powers; but this is to deny God's infinite and boundless perfection. Well then, if he had this view and knowledge of what Adam would do in such a case, if thus left to himself, that is, that he would sin; he determined either to hinder or suffer it, to prevent or permit it. It is manifest that he did not determine to prevent it, for if so, it would not have been; and his not determining or decreeing to prevent it, when he infallibly knew it would be if he did not, was decreeing to permit it. And then, upon this decree to permit the fall, proceeded God's certain foreknowledge of it, as future.

Moreover, this permissive decree and foreknowledge of man's transgression and apostasy, plainly appear from God's having foreordained a Redeemer before the foundation of the world, as according to 1 Pet. i. 18—20. And now, seeing these things are plainly so, viz: that God did thus determine to permit the fall of man, which, in his perfect and boundless knowledge, he saw would be, if he did not hinder it by his immediate, super-added influence; and consequently foresaw it, as a thing that would surely be; so plain, that he must have a strange art of managing his reason, who will carefully follow these few steps I have here taken, and not be constrained to yield his assent; then, surely, one would think there was more reverence and honour due to the great and glorious majesty of God, than for any poor worms of the dust to bring in their bold charges against him here, and say, that for these things he is the author of sin: either in that he created man at all, or in that he did not prevent his sin, when he could have done it. Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God? Surely, it becomes us to entertain more honourable, exalting thoughts of God, than to give the least way to such a vile suggestion; even supposing our poor mole-eyes should not be able to discern, to our satisfaction, how it could be otherwise. We may, on the one hand, be clearly assured of God's permissive decree, and certain foreknowledge of man's sin; and, on the other hand, as well assured, that he is essentially and infinitely holy; and though we should not be able to reconcile these together, yet he can; and that ought to silence and satisfy us. It does not well

befit us to put ourselves on a par with him; and think that he can know nothing but what we must know too. But yet, I see no need of leaving the case at this issue neither; for how unreasonable and ridiculous is this ground of the charge! God did not propose and determine to prevent Adam's sinning, when it was easy to his power to have prevented it; well, and what then? Did not the Lord give him sufficient power to have prevented it himself? And was not this enough to free the kind Creator from all blame in the case? Cannot God make a creature perfect, and complete in its order and rank, endowed with full ability and power to preserve its glory unstained, and put it in a state of probation and trial, without a criminal charge? Must he be called to answer at the creature's bar, for his own miscarriage, and voluntary rebellion, in such a case? Indeed, if we maintained that God did not give Adam sufficient power to preserve his fidelity, and withstand the temptation; or that God, by his immediate energy, overpowered him to a compliance; then, I confess, there would be no standing before the argument. But, as we assert no such thing, nor anything that will afford such a consequence, how unfair and inexcusable is it, to give out as if we did! which is the method of too many, either ignorantly or wilfully. And let me observe, that the Arminians, yea, men of all sorts of religions in the world, are no less obliged to answer this difficulty, than the Calvinists; for they must all acknowledge that there is sin in the world, and that God has permitted it, otherwise it could not be; yea, you must acknowledge yourselves to

have been guilty of sins, and such as you might have avoided. But dare you lift up your face to God, and say to him, "I have done many evils, even such as I had power to refrain; but they are thy sins, and not mine, because thou didst not keep me from them?" Would not your own reason confound you with shame, at the thoughts of such a malapert, senseless speech to God? As little reason is there, whatever less, for charging the righteous God in the case of Adam's transgression.

Or, is it matter of just prejudice against this doctrine, that mankind are said to have been considered, in the divine decree, as universally fallen in Adam, in consequence of his breach and violation of the covenant of God, wherein he was appointed the covenant-head and representative of his posterity? But, sure, yourselves must acknowledge that all mankind did fall in Adam's transgression, if you profess to believe the holy Scriptures. So long as the fifth chapter of St. Paul's epistle to the Romans stands in the Bible, it will be impossible, with any face of modesty, to deny it; where we are told, that "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned;" and, that "by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation." When you say that all mankind are recovered again out of the condemnation and ruin which the sin of Adam brought upon them, by Jesus Christ, is it not an acknowledgment that they were at once fallen, and ruined by it? And inasmuch as yourselves acknowledge it was so, you must acknowledge it was reasonable and no way incon-

sistent with the perfections of God that it should be so; or else you say, point blank, that God was, at least once, unrighteous. And now, seeing mankind were fallen in Adam, which God's glorious perfections will not suffer us to think was any way unreasonable or unjust in him, it necessarily follows, that it would have been no way unreasonable or unjust in God, if he had so pleased, to have left them all in that fallen state, without restoring any. Seeing there was once a plain forfeiture of all rights and privileges, according to law and justice, it was at the free pleasure of the great Lawgiver to bestow them again upon any or not; unless you will say that our recovery by Christ was not of free and mere grace, but what God was bound to order and bring about, or else oppose his own nature, and be unjust; and so, that herein he did what we have no reason to thank him for: which to say, is not only a gross inconsistency in itself, but such an impiety against God, that few, I believe, would be so bold as to venture upon it. It is ridiculous to talk of our being redeemed by God out of a miserable state, which it was unjust for him either to suffer us to come into, or yet to leave us in. There is no need of a mediator and redeemer in such a case. Then, indeed, Christ is dead in vain! Thus far we have made our way clear. Well then, I say again, if it would have been no way unbecoming God, if he had so pleased, to have determined to leave all mankind in that fallen state; no man will say, who duly considers what he says, that it would have been any way unbecoming him, had he so pleased, looking upon them in this fallen,

guilty, apostate state, to have made this distinction among them, in his eternal purpose, which I am defending. And so the proper doctrine of predestination, in the right notion of it, must be owned to be entirely reasonable; and the very method, for what we know, that God (unless he has told us to the contrary) was pleased to take.

But, to make all this yet clearer, I would give this farther brief account of the reasonableness of mankind's partaking in the sad fruits of Adam's transgression. I would account for it, from his being set up as their public head and representative in the first covenant. If this constitution and appointment of God was reasonable, then all that was natively consequent upon it, according to the tenor of it, must be so too. To make it appear that this constitution was every way just and reasonable, let it be considered, that it was in its own nature adapted and directly calculated to the great good and advantage of mankind, securing to them a confirmed state of innocence and everlasting happiness, upon their first father's continuing obedient, so long as God saw fit to leave him in a state of probation and trial; so that none of them would have been any more in the danger of a probationary state for themselves. Adam was sufficiently impowered to manage this great trust, endowed with full ability to keep the covenant; yea, with as full as any of his offspring would have had, had they been to pass a time of trial for themselves; and his motives to care and watchfulness were as strong as theirs could have been, having his own eternal interest as much engaged in the case as theirs; so that their whole

stock, all their everlasting concerns, were every whit as safe in his hands, as they would have been in their own. And, seeing their case was, this way, as safe as if it had been in their own management, and there was a rational prospect of a glorious, unspeakable advantage by it, though there was an awful evil on the other hand, in case of disobedience; yet, since the rational hope on the one hand, was far greater than the danger on the other, it was surely a reasonable, wise and good plan, and which, I am satisfied, we would all have admired and praised the glorious God for, had our representative fulfilled his part of the covenant, and we now been enjoying the happy consequences of it. If so, then, how unreasonable and wicked must it be now to quarrel with the scheme and its glorious Author on the account of it, because it has eventually proved, through our trustee's default, to our disadvantage? If it would have been just and altogether right had he obeyed, does his sin and disobedience make it wrong and unjust? One thing more may be observed here, to free the subject of all misapprehension, viz: that it is not imagined that the same degree of punishment is justly due to Adam's posterity, merely on account of his transgression, which was due to himself for it. Thus far only is certain in this matter, that beside our being exposed by it to the various miseries of this life, and death itself, we lost all right and title to the life and happiness which God promised in the covenant, and the glorious moral image of God in our souls, viz: our original righteousness; so that, instead of being now naturally holy and upright, we

are naturally depraved and sinful; which is the awful foundation and spring of our numberless actual transgressions, whereby we deserve an awfully aggravated condemnation. I say, persons, for their actual sins, though they flow from their original corruption as the spring and fountain of them, deserve an awfully aggravated condemnation, or unspeakably greater than the law denounces only on the account of Adam's transgression; inasmuch as that man or woman cannot be found, of whom it could justly be said, that they had never been farther guilty of actual sin, than what was absolutely unavoidable from the original depravity of their nature. These things may suffice to evince the reasonableness of the doctrine of all mankind's being fallen in Adam; and of their being considered as such, in the decree and purpose of God concerning their eternal states; which, as has been already shown, proves the reasonableness of the doctrine of predestination; forasmuch as God might justly have determined, either to save none, or to save all, or to save only a part, as he pleased.

But farther, if any should yet be unwilling to yield the reasonableness of mankind's being so disinherited of all their spiritual and eternal privileges; and their being liable to such a state of misery, by Adam's sin and disobedience; whatever temporal calamities they might in justice and reason be exposed to by it; I would prove the reasonableness of the doctrine I am chiefly insisting upon, from principles which they must unavoidably grant, if they are not lost to all the common sense of mankind. You must own, that all mankind, except infants, have

actually sinned, whether you own it to be the effect of Adam's sinning or not. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." That it is so, in fact, is too notorious to be denied. Yea, you must own that mankind are naturally inclined to sin, and have a strong bias and propension that way. These things you must confess, account for them how you will; and I am apt to think, the scripture account, resolving the universal depravity and sinful propensions of the human nature, into the transgression of our first parent, as the cause, will answer full as well as any you can give. It will be as satisfactory as either Plato's pre-existent state in the stars, or the eternal evil principle of the Manichees; or yet the imitation and example of Pelagius. However, that mankind are so universally guilty of sin, let it come how it will, is but too manifest. Moreover, you must grant that they justly deserve punishment for their sin, from the sovereign Lawgiver of the rational world; to say otherwise, is to say that sin is not sin; sin must be as good as obedience and duty, if the sinner deserves no worse for it; which is an absurdity a little too big to swallow, that takes away all distinction between moral good and evil, and destroys all the notions of justice in the world. You must also grant, that God, from all eternity, certainly foresaw all the sins of all men, unless you have a God like yourself, who knows now, what he did not know before, by information from others. Now lay these things together, and then see, if it does not follow, by an unavoidable, logical necessity, that God might justly have decreed, and purposed from everlasting, to pun-

ish the sinful, disobedient children of men, and not to save any of them out of their guilty state. For if God from everlasting foresaw that they would deserve to be thus cast off and punished, then he might justly determine to deal so by them; unless you will say, it was unjust for him to determine to do what was just to do. And is the justness of his determining to punish a part of them only, according to the rules of governing justice, less conceivable, while he determines to save the rest in a way agreeable to the glory of his majesty and government, through the mediation and redemption of his eternal Son? Thus you may see, the denying of original sin does not overthrow the doctrine of predestination; all that is gained by it, is a certainty that all such as die in their infancy, were elected to eternal life; but then, they were not chosen in Christ, a Redeemer, nor are they brought to happiness through his redemption; which is a notion that does not chime very well with the scriptures, which everywhere represent the atonement of Christ, as the only way of eternal happiness, to any of the human progeny; which, I think, is a farther evident proof of original sin. And thus, I think, I have sufficiently cleared the first proposition.

2. In the next place, is there anything so horrid in the second article, viz: that God's decree and purpose, to save any of the fallen, apostate race, was not founded upon his foresight of their good works, and diligent endeavours, as the cause of it; but was purely owing to his own sovereign pleasure and grace? This is a sentiment so far from being unreasonable, that I think the contrary is plainly so,

absolutely considered, viz: that the imperfect, corrupted, and altogether selfish endeavours of rebellious, guilty creatures, should be of such high price with God, as necessarily to determine him to save them; so that he would be unjust, if he did not thereupon design and effectuate their salvation. Is this a notion, either so very reasonable in itself, or honourable to God? And yet this is the principle that must be maintained, if the doctrine I am defending, be charged with being in itself unreasonable. To manifest a little the unreasonableness of such a notion, I would ask, if an entire and perfect obedience to the law of God, without the least defect, would be any more than our duty to him, as he is such a glorious Being, and we his creatures? If it would not, and no man in his right wits will say otherwise, then how can the very imperfect, the every way corrupt, and contemptible obedience, that is performed by guilty sinners, make it so necessary for God to pardon their past disobedience, as that he would be unreasonable and unjust, if he did not? According to this principle, pardon would not properly be pardon; it would not be an act of mere grace, and of rich mercy, but of just debt. But who is there, that has the front to demand it, as such, for all the good works that ever he did? I believe you would find hard work of it to bring the notion into practice, and very formally tell the great God, that "though you had sinned against him, and contemned his authority; yet you had done so well since, that you would not now be beholden to him for pardon, you claimed it as your due, on the score of his essential

equity, which, he would be unjust, if he refused." It is, moreover, a notion that entirely supersedes and takes away all necessity of Christ's atonement and satisfaction. What need of such a propitiation and ransom, if anything that guilty sinners could do, could render it unjust in God, not to save them? And now, seeing these things are plainly so, it as plainly and necessarily follows, that it was no way unreasonable, nor unbecoming any of the divine perfections, for God to make his own sovereign, absolute good-will and pleasure, the rule of his determinations, of dispensing his saving mercies to any fallen, guilty sinners; and not their works or endeavours. Yea, I will add, it is highly presumable from reason itself, and seems to be its very dictates, that this was actually the way of God's proceeding in the case; as what was most suitable to his independent sovereignty, for the maintaining, and illustration of his exalted glory; and to abase the pride of all flesh, that none should glory in his presence; but, as it is written, "he that glorieth, should glory in the Lord alone:" that his redeemed and saved people should for ever ascribe the whole glory and praise to his sovereign, free, distinguishing grace. This method, in the case, was proceeding like a God; as becomes the Supreme Jehovah; exalts both his own glory, and the happiness of saved sinners, to the highest; while they are ever sensible, that as he might justly have saved none, so they have nothing to ascribe to themselves in the matter, why he saved them more than any others. Hence their hearts beat high with the tenderest, sweetest resentments of love and wonder, with

the highest ascriptions of glory and praise, to him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever. So that, I believe, this doctrine suits best with the language of heaven, however it be relished on earth. If we consider the hateful, horrid, and criminal nature of sin, what can there be in any sinner to engage to him the love and favour of a God of infinite holiness and incomprehensible majesty; in whose sight the heavens are not clean; who "charges his angels with folly?" Now, though all these considerations make it plainly appear, that it is every way reasonable, yea, most becoming the adorable majesty of God, that the reason of his appointing any fallen sinners, in particular, more than others, to eternal life, should be wholly resolved into his sovereign pleasure; that it should be entirely founded in himself, and not at all in them; yet I am apprehensive that here lies the main ground of the quarrel, for though sin had made man extremely poor, it has not made him humble, but much to the contrary. The unbroken pride and haughtiness of sinners' hearts will not allow it to be right or equitable at all, that it should be altogether at the free, sovereign pleasure of God, whether to save them or not. Unless they have it in their own hands, they will quarrel with God himself, although they deserve not so much as the least ground for hope that ever he will save them. It would surely better become such hell-deserving rebels as we, to be so humbly sensible of our vile iniquities, as to acknowledge God's sovereign right to dispose of us as he sees fit; that if he should abandon us to misery for ever, it

would be but just and right, notwithstanding all that ever we could do; and if he saves us, it will be an instance of the most glorious, free, sovereign grace and mercy, which he might righteously have denied. But these things may suffice, here, to show that this part of the doctrine also stands free of all unreasonable absurdity, and unbecoming reflections on God. And if you would have the whole evidence again in a narrow compass, you may take it thus: God, the great Creator and Upholder of all things, is the rightful Lawgiver and moral Governor of the reasonable world. Considering the infinite, boundless glory and perfections of his nature, and his right in and over us, as his creatures, our obligations of love and duty to him are inconceivably great and infinite: hence sin and disobedience against such infinite majesty and obligations, is infinitely evil, deserving the sinner's everlasting rejection from God, with a superadded positive punishment. All mankind, through the sin and disobedience of their first parent, are become destitute of original righteousness, and all right to the life and happiness promised in the first covenant; and all such as are preserved to years in the world, have sinned actually in their own persons, and that far beyond what was absolutely unavoidable from their original depravity; whence they in justice deserve a far greater punishment. God had as clear and certain a knowledge of all this apostasy and sin of mankind, from all eternity, as after it actually came to pass; so that in his decrees concerning them, he considered them as in such a fallen, guilty state, deserving the execution of his

vindictive justice; and altogether insufficient to do anything that might in the least satisfy its demands, for the averting of the stroke. And so, from the whole, it clearly appears, that God had as absolute, just, and great a sovereignty over them, to appoint any part of them for life or death, according to his own pleasure, as the "potter has over his clay, of the same lump, to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour."

And now, after all these things, what can reasonably be said against the third and last of the propositions, which is, that God determined to leave a part of these guilty sinners, (viz: those whom he did not choose to salvation,) in their fallen, guilty state, and to execute justice upon them for their sins? To say that this is unjust, &c., is to say that justice is injustice, &c. All that I shall farther observe here upon it, is, how injurious and unfair treatment it is, to give out, as too many who oppose the doctrine do, as though we maintained that God doomed men to everlasting perdition, without any respect to, or consideration had of, their sin! We say, that the reason why God chose some and rejected others, that is, these rather than those, was not because of the greater goodness of the one part, and greater sinfulness of the other, for all were "clay from the same lump," without any difference of this kind among them, amounting to such value, but "because it so seemed good in his sight." We assert, that none are doomed to everlasting perdition, but for their sin; but then, it is not the reason of the difference that is made between them and those that are chosen to everlasting life.

Now, though what has been already hitherto said, in explaining and vindicating the doctrine of predestination, might sufficiently furnish a careful, understanding reader with satisfactory answers to the objections that are usually supposed to be deduced from reason against it; yet, for the more full satisfaction of all, I shall a little consider them particularly.

One objection, that makes a mighty noise in the world, is, that it makes God the author of sin; but it is as easy for me to deny this, as for the objector to assert it; and asserting is all he can do, if he obliges himself to urge it against the doctrine, only as I have represented and explained it in the preceding pages. Let such objectors show us what part of it is justly liable to such a charge, and how it contains or infers any such blasphemy. Does it make God the author of sin, to say, that he decreed to suffer Adam to sin, when, in the meantime, we assert that he gave him sufficient power not to sin; and only suffered him, without any compulsion, to abuse his liberty? How ridiculous and senseless is such a charge for this! Such objectors seem to think, or else to be willing to have it thought, that we maintain, that God either did not afford Adam sufficient ability to preserve, or that by his superior power he forced him to sin; but let their slander die with them. Yet, I think, I have met with an author that pretends to prove this vile absurdity, consequent upon the score of bare permission. This, indeed, would be a rare art, could he make it do, to free the whole world of the blame of sin all at once; for if God cannot so much as

permit sin, without being the author of it himself, then I think we are pretty clear, and all the devils too. He proves it by a simile: suppose a man to be standing on the top of a very high wall, holding a child over it by the arm; well, he does not press it down or force it to fall, but only lets it go, and suffers it to fall (if it will, I suppose); and then the demand is, whether the man was not the author of that child's fall and death? I think it is no great difficulty to answer the question. I believe none would pretend to vindicate such a gross murder; but then, I would demand if the cases were any way like one another? If this simile is supposed to be parallel to the case it is brought to illustrate, then our opinion must be, that God at first so upheld Adam by the hand of his power, as that it was impossible for him to sin; and then withdrew his hand from him, so as that it was impossible for him not to sin; whereas we assert the direct contrary of both. Before the simile can be made in any tolerable degree similar to the case, many other things must be supposed in it; particularly, that the child is endowed with such a power as that it is as easy for it to stand in the air as to fall to the ground; that the man has a rightful sovereignty and authority over it, to put it in such a situation, and make it its indispensable duty to stand where he has put it; that it has a clear knowledge of its duty, and warning of its danger, and the like. These suppositions, I believe, will pretty much alter the case.

Another objection brought against the doctrine is, that it makes God chargeable with the most unjust cruelty and

sovereign tyranny; but I have already sufficiently vindicated it from this awful charge; unless it be unjust cruelty to decree justice, which is a contradiction in express terms. Was it not just in God to make man free, as well as perfectly holy and upright—to appoint Adam the covenant head and representative of his offspring, as it has been explained—to permit him to act according to his original freedom and liberty—to permit all men to sin as they do, and to punish some of them, whom he pleases, for all the sin they are guilty of? If these things are all righteous and just enough, was it unjust in God to fore-appoint and determine them? Would those, who oppose the doctrine of predestination, but fairly represent it, and speak to it still as it is, they would surely be ashamed to offer such a charge as this against it: and of this themselves seem to be sensible; and, therefore, they commonly so manage the objection, as grossly to misrepresent the doctrine, as though it contained in it that God, in his eternal purpose, doomed a number of mankind to destruction without any consideration at all had of their sin, whereby they would justly deserve it; or that he purposed, by his irresistible power, to compel them to sin, that so he might damn them with some colour of justice; whereas we disclaim both the one and the other with the utmost abhorrence.

Again, it is objected that this doctrine makes God partial and a respecter of persons, which is justly reputed a very ill character in men, and, therefore, cannot, in the least, belong to God. This argument seems to be much

depended on among the more ignorant; but those who make so much of it, ought to consider what that respecting of persons is, which is so criminal in men. It is their making such a difference between persons, in their temper and conduct towards them, as is contrary to right and equity, on account of some accidental things or circumstances, wherein they may differ from one another: such as, nation, worldly dignity, relation, gifts, bribes, or the like; and I really own, that partiality and respect of persons, in this sense, is very far from God. "He accepts not the persons of princes, nor regards the rich more than the poor." Job xxxiv. 19. He is not only far from doing injustice to any, but he makes no account at all of the little differences among them, of nation, worldly state and condition, or the like, as a reason of any of his dealings towards them; and it is in this sense that respecting of persons is always taken in the Scripture, wherever it is condemned in men, or denied concerning God. And, sure, the doctrine I am defending is so far from inferring any such respect of persons in God, that it is, at the first view, directly contrary to it. Yet, farther, I would observe, there may be among men a favouring of one more than another, which you may call respecting of persons, or if you will, partiality, or by what name you please; but it carries no ill idea in it. Such, for instance, as our Lord speaks of (Matt. xx.), where the lord of the vineyard gave to some of his labourers an undeserved bounty, while he gave to others only what justice necessarily required. And this is brought in by our Lord Jesus himself, for this very

case (see ver. 16.), to vindicate God's making such a difference among guilty sinners, against such as make this objection; and God's defence here is unanswerable against all the murmurings of such as he has not chosen to salvation. Friend, I do thee no wrong, whatsoever good I do to others; is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?

It is farther objected, that, according to this doctrine, it is God's fault, and not theirs, that any perish; inasmuch as it was ever impossible for them to be saved, seeing they were under an irreversible appointment to destruction, before ever they had a being. But what has been said already, will easily answer all the difficulty that may seem to be in this argument, viz: that God appointed them to be punished only for their sins, whereby they in justice deserve it. And, surely, their sinning is not any fault in God; nor yet his appointing them to deserved punishment for it; but seeing all their punishment will be only according to the demerit of their sin, their whole destruction will properly be of themselves, and their own fault. But if any should yet foolishly think, that the mere necessity or infallible certainty of the event would render sinners free of all the blame of their destruction, because it was always certain, that so it would be in the end, let them try any other scheme they please, and see whether they can rid themselves of the difficulty; for whatsoever at any time is, was always infallibly certain to be, whether you allow a decree concerning it or not; so that you must

either deny that it is so much as possible for any creature to perish justly at all, or you must own that the bare certainty of the event, that they will perish, does not free them from being the proper blamable causes of their own perdition; and its being certain by a divine appointment, makes them no more clear of the blame, because the decree only is, to punish them for, and according to, the demerit of their sins; which sins, it lays no forcible constraint or compulsion upon them, to be guilty of.

Again, it is said, "that if this doctrine be true, then it follows, that God creates men to damn them." This seems to be a ready-hand argument, almost in every one's mouth that denies the doctrine.

Before we speak to any words or propositions, we ought to understand what is meant by them. Now all the meaning I can conceive in this sentence, [God creates men to damn them,] consistent with the propriety of speech, is, that their damnation is God's end in creating them; the final cause and reason of his bringing them into being. And this imports in it that God loves and delights in the punishment and misery of creatures, merely as such, and for its own sake; which is a thing most blasphemous to suppose of him. To suppose, that the misery of any creature, strictly and abstractly in itself, without any other consideration, is agreeable and pleasing to God; yea, so agreeable, that he makes them for this very end that he may have the pleasure of punishing them; is, indeed, to represent him like the very worst of beings. But then I would ask, Does God's decreeing to punish men for their

sin, as they deserve, for maintaining the dignity of his government, and the showing forth of his infinite holiness, justice, and rightful authority; does this, I say, bear in it any such thing, as that he delights barely in the misery of creatures, so as to create them for the sake of it? How irrational is such a consequence! But if any will yet insist on it as a just consequence, I desire them to consider a little how they will free their own scheme of it; which is every whit as liable to the charge. Unless they have stupid ignorance and blasphemous presumption enough to deny God's infinite understanding and foreknowledge of all things, it is just as reasonable to bring this objection against the Arminians, as the Calvinists; and say, God creates men to damn them, if he knows beforehand that he will damn them; if he foreknew that they would die impenitent, in unbelief; and thereupon has decreed their damnation before he has created them. The truth of the matter is this, God decreed to create all men for the manifestation of his own glory, which is his end in all his works; and looking upon mankind in their apostasy and sin, he decreed to leave a particular part of them in that state, and to punish them according to their sin, for the manifestation of the glory of his sovereignty, holiness, and justice, and the right and infinite obligations of his authority, as a lawgiver over his reasonable creatures. This view of the case gives no ground for the charge contained in the objection. Though God foresees that mankind will sin against him, cannot he, notwithstanding, create them, and determine to punish them, or any part

of them, as their sin deserves, for the illustration of his glory aforesaid, without being chargeable with creating them just that he might damn them? To say so, is the same thing as to say, that the sin and default of the creature must bind up God's hands from doing that which is in itself every way reasonable and right; and, in short, to say that right is wrong.

But I presume I have been long enough on the first method proposed for defending and confirming this doctrine; and that, from what has been said, it sufficiently appears, at least, that it is a doctrine free from all unreasonable absurdity in itself, and no way dishonourable to God; so that reason has nothing to say, why it may not be so. And if, in the next place, we find that God's infallible word of truth declares that it is so, this ought to put a final conclusion to the debate, and fully determine the controversy. If there is nothing in the doctrine absurd, or contrary to reason, why it may not be so; then, when a passage of Scripture is brought to prove that it is so, we must not be put off any more with this answer, that "whatever the Scripture means, it cannot mean predestination." A great asserter of the Arminian doctrine, I think, as good as owns the reasonableness of the Calvinist doctrine. I mean Bishop Burnet, when he says, "It is one of the points wherein all agree, that God might have condemned every man to have perished for his own sins." * If God might

* Expos. xxxix. Art., page 167, Fol. This great man manages the debate with the greatest candour and temper of any I have met with of the Arminian side; and yet even he is far from dealing so fairly as he ought,

have condemned all men to perdition for their sins, then, surely, much more a part of them only. But farther, reason not only readily allows, that God might have formed his eternal purposes and decrees, concerning fallen man, according to this doctrine; but, if duly attended to, without selfish prejudice, it seems, as has been already hinted, powerfully to persuade us that so the case really is, as being most becoming God's independent sovereignty; and most expressive of the absolute freeness, and glorious riches of his grace to those that are saved; whereby the whole glory of it is secured to himself, and no ground afforded to the hell-deserving sinner for anything contrary to those humble acknowledgements of his own wretchedness, that well become him; whereas the contrary doctrine leaves room to the sinner to trust to something in himself, and ascribe something to himself, in the matter of his salvation. It sets too high a value upon the despicable, religious endeavours of corrupted sinners, when it maintains, that God is thereby induced to receive the sinner to favour, notwithstanding all his rebellions; and by thus representing the God, whom by disobedience we have contemned and dishonoured, as so readily and surely reconciled to us on such terms, it depreciates his injured honours, and

especially when he represents the maintainers of absolute predestination, as maintaining that the decree lays a compulsory force on the creature to sin. On this misrepresentation much of his arguing for the Arminians proceeds. He lays hold on the Supralapsarian Scheme for it, and, without sufficient evidence, pretends that the Sublapsarian scheme ultimately resolves and terminates in the same, as so represented.

takes off from the infinite malignity and due horror of sin. If sin against God is looked upon as a thing that is so easily compensated, and the breach occasioned by it, so readily made up on such low conditions: what mean, unworthy conceptions are we likely to entertain of God's infinite perfections and adorable attributes, when the contempt of them by sin is reckoned such a small matter? But,

2. I proceed, with more express evidence and certainty, to prove and confirm the doctrine from the divine oracles, and infallible scriptures of truth. And here I shall first prove, that God has appointed and chosen some of fallen mankind to eternal life and salvation; and that merely of his own sovereign grace and good pleasure, and not upon the foresight of any goodness of theirs, whereby they would distinguish themselves from others, as the reason of it. Next, I shall prove that the rest of mankind, not thus chosen to life, God has appointed to leave in their sins, and to punish them for them, according to their deserts: and then I shall answer such objections as are supposed to be in the scriptures against this doctrine, and give the true meaning of such scripture passages consistent with it.

The first place of scripture I shall adduce for the proof of absolute election, is Acts xiii. 48, where, after an account of the opposition made to the apostles Paul and Barnabas, at Antioch, and the strong endeavours used by some, to prejudice the people against the doctrine which they preached, it is said, that "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." The plain sense of these words

is, that notwithstanding all the means used in that place, to hinder the people from believing the apostles' doctrine, yet a considerable number did believe; because God had ordained them to eternal life, and so gave them faith to believe, in spite of all the arts of men used with them to the contrary; and therefore it was impossible for the enemies of Christianity to keep them in unbelief. And this is perfectly agreeable to the sense of our blessed Lord, when he says, that "false Christs and false prophets should arise, showing such signs and wonders, that if it were possible, they would deceive the very elect;" (Matt. xxiv. 24;) clearly implying, that God had elected some to everlasting salvation, and the necessary means of it; whom it is therefore utterly impossible for false teachers, with all their powers, finally to deceive and keep from believing in the true Redeemer. If any should say, that the reason why these were ordained to eternal life, and had grace given them to believe, was, because they were more righteously disposed, and better than the rest; this is not only contrary to the scope of the place, and the mode of expressing the matter in the text, but we find in the next verse but one, that there were some of the most religious that believed not; we are told that these opposers stirred up the devout (that is, the religious) and honourable women, as well as the chief men of the city, to persecute the apostles; but they could not have the same influence upon those whom God had ordained to eternal life; it was impossible for them to deceive the elect.

Another very clear, and most express passage to our

purpose, is in Rom. xi. 5—7. "Even so then, at this present time also, there is a remnant, according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." Here the apostle observes, that as in the time of the greatest defection of the people of Israel, in Elijah's days, God had reserved to himself a remnant of seven thousand; even so, at that present time, when the greater body of the Jewish nation had rejected Christ, there was also a remnant, according to the election of grace, that did believe. This believing remnant of the Jewish nation, were those who were elected and chosen out of it, to faith and salvation: and this election, whereby they were thus chosen, was an election of grace. Well, you will say, perhaps, you own all this, that God had elected a remnant of the Jews to faith in Christ, and salvation by him; but then the reason of God's electing them was their good works; whereby he foresaw they would render themselves more worthy of his choice than the rest. But don't you see, that the apostle expressly bars against such an imagination, when he says, "It is an election of grace; and that if it be of grace, then it is no more of works; or else grace is not grace?" He tells you, that the election of works, which you contend for, is not the election of grace, which he asserts: if it be of works, it is no more grace. An election of works and grace both, is a down-

right inconsistency, if we allow St. Paul to be the judge. "Israel has not obtained that which he seeketh for." There were many of Israel who were left to unbelief, that were seeking for righteousness and life as much as the others, that were, notwithstanding, sanctified by faith. Though they were thus equal among themselves, yet there was an election among them that obtained it, "when the rest were blinded," that is, left to their own blindness. I cannot see how the doctrine of absolute election can well be asserted in more strong, plain, and express terms, than the apostle uses for it in these verses. It cannot be said, that all he means by the "election of this remnant," was only God's purpose of affording them the privilege of the gospel, and outward means of grace; for all the rest had the advantages afforded them, as well as they, according to the words of our Lord, "Many were called, but few (*i. e.* a remnant of them only) were chosen;" (Matt. xx. 16;) which manifestly shows, that they were elected to the saving benefit of those means, in consequence of which, they actually did obtain it: when the rest, who had the same advantage of these outward means, and were seeking for justification and life as well as they, did not obtain it; but were left in their blindness and unbelief. To conclude this argument, the apostle here asserts an election of some, out of others, to eternal life; and asserts it to be an election of grace, in such a full sense, as that it cannot be of works in any sense. So that you may see here a flat contradiction between the inspired apostle and the Arminians. They say, "Election is on the account of

works foreseen;" he says, "It is not of works, but wholly of grace." They say, "It may be of works and grace both;" he says, "It cannot, without destroying the nature of both."

For another proof, you may look as far back as Rom. viii. 28—30:—"All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Those whom the apostle terms "the called, according to God's purpose," he tells us, ver. 28, are those "that love God;" and, ver. 30, they are those who are justified, and, in the end, will be as surely glorified. So that by calling here, the apostle means being called effectually to faith and holiness by the Spirit of God, or saving conversion; and he tells us, that those who are thus effectually called and converted by God in time, are so called by him in pursuance of his preceding purpose and decree concerning them; for they are called according to his purpose. He predestinated, or fore-appointed them to be conformed to the image of his Son, to be made like Christ in holiness; and as this purpose and fore-appointment of God made their sanctification and justification infallibly certain, so it equally secures their final glorification. For whom he did predestinate, them he called, justified, and glorified. And those who are predestinated, and fore-appointed of God to holiness and happiness, are said to be

those whom he foreknew. By God's foreknowing them, we are not to understand his having a bare speculative foreknowledge of them, and of what they would be before their effectual calling; for in this sense he foreknew all others as well as them; but his having had a special love to them, and gracious design to do them good, beyond the rest of mankind; or it signifies his foreknowing them as his own, as those whom he had chosen and distinguished for himself, in his eternal purpose, according to what is said, "The Lord knoweth them that are his." 2 Tim. ii. 19. Thus you see, this place is a clear proof of an election and predestination to grace and salvation; and that represented so sovereign and entirely of God, as not to be founded on any qualification in the creature; insuring both the sinner's true conversion to holiness, and his final perseverance to the heavenly glory: and all this according to God's purpose, and not their own management or behaviour.

The ninth chapter of this epistle is very plain and express on this argument. In the beginning of it, the apostle speaks with reference to the unbelief of the general part of the Jewish nation: their rejection of the true Messiah; declaring his great grief on that account. And then, in the sixth verse, he comes to speak to a difficulty which seemed to occur, concerning God's leaving the main body of the Jews to unbelief, and so casting them off from being any longer his people, taken from his word of promise to Abraham, and often afterwards, that "he would be a God to him, and his seed after him for ever." It would

seem, at that time, when God had cast off that people, all to a very small remnant, and removed his church to the Gentiles, as if he had broken his word, and his promise had not been fulfilled, or taken effect. To this the apostle answers, that that was no argument that the word of God had taken no effect; and he clears it up by showing that the word of promise peculiarly respected those of Abraham's offspring who belonged to the election of grace; saying, "they are not all Israel which are of Israel;" that is, they are not all that Israel which God had principally in his eye in the promise, who belong to Israel by natural relation, or external visible union. The peculiar Israel, or children of promise, were those whom the Lord had elected and chosen among them to everlasting life; and to these the promise was always made good, whether they were more or fewer. The promise, indeed, being a plain intimation that a large number belonging to the election of grace should be of Abraham's progeny, was the foundation of a visible church among them, and gave them all a right to the visible privileges of it, till they made a forfeiture themselves. But the promise, in the full import of it, by way of engagement on God, related only to those whom he had chosen among them. That this is the apostle's meaning here, appears plainly from all that follows. For the illustration and confirmation of this case, he shows that God put a great limitation upon that seed of Abraham to which he particularly designed the promise in his words to Abraham himself, saying, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." Hereby the Lord signified to him, that there was a greater

number of the election to be of his posterity in Isaac's line than in the line of Ishmael, or of any of his other sons that he should ever have, as he had several by a second marriage; and, therefore, God would take a more special care of Isaac's offspring. And, indeed, no other account can be given of his distinguishing concerns about them more than the rest of Abraham's posterity; or for his affording greater advantages to one nation than another at this day, but because of a much greater number of his elect ones being among them, because he knows whom he has chosen. And then the apostle comes to give another instance of the same kind, viz: the distinction which God made between the two branches of Isaac's offspring in the tenth and following verses, "And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of him that calleth, it was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger." Here the apostle shows, that though God had said, that the seed of Abraham, which he chiefly intended in the promise of being their God, was to be in Isaac's line, yet he intended one part of Isaac's seed more than the other; which he intimated to Rebecca before her twin-children were born, when he said, "The elder shall serve the younger." And thus he observes, there was a distinguishing purpose and decree of God concerning them, (before they had done any good or evil,) according to election; which purpose of election is not of works, "but of him that

calleth," according to his own sovereign pleasure. The apostle's meaning is plainly this, that God's choosing Jacob, and a great number of his posterity, more than Esau or his posterity, was not on account of any good works to be performed by any of them, more than by the others, as the reason of it; any more than it was on account of good works already done, before they were born, when neither of them had done neither good or evil; so, though the apostle's words very likely refer to the respective posterities of those two brothers, as well as to their own persons, yet they respect their spiritual interest more than their temporal, and signify that God had many more of his elect in the posterity of Jacob than of Esau, at least, while they continued two visibly distinct bodies; and, therefore, he took more care of Jacob's posterity, taking them into, and keeping them in, a visible church relation to himself, while he suffered the posterity of Esau to degenerate into heathenism and pagan idolatry; so calling them off from so much as any visible relation to him, as his church. And this directly answers the apostle's purpose, which is, to show that God had a peculiar elect seed among the seed of Abraham and of Isaac, which he principally designed, and referred to, in the promise; and, therefore, it was no argument that the word of God had failed, or taken no effect, though great bodies of their natural seed were neglected, and separated from his church; and it was as reasonable to suppose the same thing of Jacob's seed. This election, he asserts, was not of works, but purely of him that calleth, as he pleases. And so, ver. 14, and

seq., he goes on to answer the grand objection which he saw would readily be laid against the doctrine, viz: that it makes God unjust, cruel, partial, and all what not. "What shall we say then?" says he; "Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." He observes, that God had sufficiently answered the objection himself in these words to Moses, Exodus xxxiii. 19, which clearly signify that all had sinned, and justly deserved the execution of his wrath; and so were become objects of mere mercy, which he might bestow or withhold, according to his own sovereign pleasure, without any unrighteousness. And, indeed, this is the answer that will stand for ever; and wherewith God will one day silence all the quarrelings of haughty creatures. And in these words he declares, that as he justly might, so he really has reserved this royal sovereignty to himself, of bestowing mercy to guilty creatures, just as himself pleases; that he will have mercy and compassion on whom he will. From whence the apostle clearly infers, ver. 16, "So then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy;" *i. e.* the election of any sinners is not at all of themselves, as being better inclined and behaved than others, but altogether of God, who bestows mercy as he pleases; "who will have mercy on whom he will have mercy; and will have compassion on whom he will have compassion." But I presume I need prosecute the argument no farther from this

chapter; it is fully clear already, beyond all reasonable contradiction, that it maintains the very doctrine I have undertaken to prove.

And it is no less clearly maintained in the first chapter to the Ephesians: "According as he hath chosen us in him (viz: Christ) before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him, in love. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." Vers. 4, 5. The election which the apostle here speaks of, was more than a choosing of them to external church privileges, even an election to eternal salvation; for he says, "God had predestinated them to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself." "And, (as he says, Rom. viii. 17,) if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." Moreover, he describes them as those that were in a state of saving grace, (ver. 3,) saying, "God hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus." And then immediately adds, "according as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy." Their "being blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ," was according to God's foregoing choice of them; it was the fruit of a gracious and eternal purpose to that end; and they were chosen, not because they would be holy, but that they should be holy; their goodness was not the cause, but the effect of their election. And, (ver. 5,) they were predestinated, or fore-appointed, to be the children of God, not according to their good works, or dispositions, but

according to the good pleasure of his will; not to their own praise, but to the praise of the glory of his grace; as it follows (ver. 6). And very expressly, to the same purpose, he says, (ver. 11,) "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." We are not predestinated to the heavenly inheritance, says he, according to the purpose of one who proceeds according to the will and behaviour of others; but "according to the purpose of him who does all things after the counsel of his own will."

Another place of scripture, very expressly asserting an absolute election, you may see in 2 Tim. i. 9. "God hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." The plain meaning of these words, if they can be made plainer, is, as if the apostle had said, "God hath saved us, and effectually called us, out of a state of sin to holiness; and this is not to be ascribed to any works or endeavours of ours, as the reason of it, but to his own sovereign purpose and grace, or free favour; which grace was made sure to us in Christ, by the Father's engagement to him in the eternal covenant of redemption before the world began." This is a natural and easy paraphrase upon the words, though indeed they do not need any; I am very sure, if they were found anywhere else but in the Bible, every one would readily acknowledge they contained the Calvinistic doctrine of election. See also 2 Thess. ii.

13, 14, 1 Pet. 1, 2, John xv. 16, with many other places of scripture, which it is needless to mention.

But besides these direct and immediate testimonies of scripture to the doctrine, it may be farther clearly proved from such scripture passages as declare the absoluteness and sovereignty of God's proceeding in the effectual calling and conversion of sinners to himself. If God, in the regeneration and conversion of sinners, proceeds in an absolute sovereign way, calling whom he will, without regarding their previous motion and behaviour, as the reason of his proceeding, on which it is suspended; then his choosing of them must be absolute, and sovereign too; for actual renovation in time is just the fruit and execution of the eternal purpose; and therefore the one must exactly answer to the other. Many are the places of scripture which plainly teach us that God's renewing and converting of any sinners is wholly owing to his sovereign, distinguishing favour and mercy, and not to any distinguishing goodness of their own. I shall just only select a few. What can be more express to this purpose than these words? "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Tit. iii. 3—5. In the same manner, the apostle speaks in the second chapter to the

Ephesians: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein, in time past, ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the decrees of the flesh and the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, by grace ye are saved." Oh, sirs, thousands that are now in heaven, would have been in hell, had God waited for their good works, or preparing themselves for his grace, before he had laid hold of them by converting power. And what great excellency is there in all the good works, falsely so called, of an unregenerate sinner, when he has done them, to engage God to save him? How clearly is the free, absolute sovereignty of God in the effectual calling, declared (1 Cor. i. 26—30). "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of this world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen; yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence." Here you see, God calls just whom he will, among the guilty children of men. Some of the

high and mighty of the world; but more generally he has ordered it that those whom he designs to call, shall be poor and mean in all worldly respects; and the general reason is, to dash down all human pride, that no flesh should glory in his presence; but that he that glorieth, should glory only in the Lord, ver. 31. And it is remarkable how the apostle alters the term; after he had begun with "calling," he puts in "choosing" in the place of it; because temporal vocation exactly corresponds to eternal election, as the certain consequence and evidence of it; and the one is as free and absolute as the other, so that it was equal which of the terms he used. Numbers of Scripture instances prove this truth. What good works of obedience to Christ had Paul done? Or what good dispositions had he towards Him, before He reached him by his powerful grace, to induce the Lord to choose and call him? Were not great numbers of his nation, as good as he, left to perish in unbelief? What were the good works and dispositions of Abraham, more than others, when God called him, as he was serving other gods on the other side of the flood, with the rest of his father's house? (Josh. xxiv. 2) of whom the Lord says, (Isa. li. 2,) "I called him alone, and blessed him." This argument is so clear and certain in all its parts, that I think it would be quite superfluous to bestow any more pains upon it.

Again, the doctrine of absolute election appears from the only way of fallen sinners' salvation, as it is laid down and declared in the gospel, viz: the way of believing only and entirely in the merit and righteousness of the Lord

Jesus for actual reconciliation with God. The argument here may be thus formed: that doctrine which leaves no room for guilty sinners to rest and depend on anything but the merit and atonement of Jesus Christ only, for the reconciled favour of God, and their acceptance with him; the contrary of which does give room to sinners to rest, and depend also, on something else for reconciliation and acceptance with God, must be true, and its contrary false, according to the Scriptures. But the doctrine of absolute election leaves no room for guilty sinners to rest and depend on anything for the reconciled favour of God, and their acceptance with him, but the merit and atonement of Jesus Christ only; and the contrary doctrine does give them room to rest, and depend also, on something else for it, viz: something in them, or done by them; therefore, the doctrine of absolute election is true, and the contrary doctrine false, according to the Scriptures.

The Scripture clearly teaches us to look only to the merit and atonement of Christ's obedience and sufferings for actual justification before God, and reconciliation with him; and it is as clear, that the doctrine of sinners being chosen in Christ, and fore-appointed to justification and eternal life through him, of God's mere, sovereign, free grace, agrees well with this; it cuts all the sinews of self-dependence, and leaves the sinner no other foundation to cast himself upon, but the sovereign mercy of God, through a redeeming Saviour. And I think it is as clear again, on the other hand, that the opposite doctrine of a conditional election, founded either upon the actual existence

of some good in, or done by the sinner, or upon the foresight of it to be in him, or done by him, lays a foundation for self-dependence, and so tends to keep undone sinners from closing with Christ in the way of the gospel. This delusive opinion makes poor creatures swell very big with a conceit of themselves, and what they do. When they imagine their qualifications and doings are of such price with God, it makes them halve the procurement of their salvation between Christ's righteousness and their own, which he will never bear. It makes them patch their filthy rags and menstruous cloaths to his complete, unspotted robe, for a joint recommendation of them to God's acceptance. Indeed, I cannot see a material difference between Arminian Protestants and the Papists, about the doctrine of justification. And I find two great bishops, one of each sort, of my mind. Says Bishop Burnet, in his Exposition (more properly, perversion) of the thirty-nine articles of the Church of England, page 126, "This matter was so stated by many of the writers of the Church of Rome, after the Reformation, that, as to the main of it, we have no just exception to it." The bishop of Meaux, in his Exposition of the doctrine of the Catholic Church, page 93, after he has been explaining their sense and justification, and merit of good works, says, "And, indeed, we must acknowledge, that the learned of their party (meaning the Reformed) do not contend so much of late about this subject, as they did formerly; and there are but few who do not; there ought not to have been a breach on this point. But if this important difficulty about justi-

fication, upon which their first authors laid all their stress, be not looked upon now as essential by the wisest persons among them, we leave them to think what they ought to judge of their separation; and what hopes there would be of a union, if they would but overcome their prejudice, and quit the spirit of contention." Thus we see Protestants and Papists cordially shaking hands, and agreeing again in one of the most material matters of difference. And all the contest remaining is, which side has made the approach to the other. The one says, "You have come to us;" the other says, "No; but you have come to us." And this, I believe, will be judged but a small matter for brethren to fall out about. However, I think I might venture, in a court of equity, to undertake to obtain sentence, upon this plea, in favour of the Romish gentleman.

The last argument I shall offer, for confirmation of this doctrine, shall be taken from the declared scope and design of God in the gospel, which is, as it is highly reasonable, to secure the whole glory of sinners' salvation to himself, and for ever hide pride from man. He assures us, he has so concerted the scheme and laid the plan, that the saved sinner shall not have the least ground to boast, or glory; which evidently proves, that election is not conditional, founded on sinners' good works or dispositions; but absolute, founded on God's good pleasure. For upon the conditional scheme, the justified, converted person has it to ascribe to himself, that he, more than another, is in such a happy state. The reason cannot be God's distinguishing love and grace to him, beyond others, but his

own distinguishing goodness; for the others are supposed to have had as much love and kindness from God as he. Whence, then, came the difference that is between them? Not from God, for he made no difference; but from himself. And does not this give some ground for boasting in the case—to arrogate some glory and praise to himself? But the true gospel-way of salvation will not, in the least, admit of any such thing. It is cross to God's declared view and design in it. "For by grace ye are saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast." Eph. ii. 8, 9. The way which God has laid for sinners' salvation, is such, that it precludes and bars against all boasting in those that are saved; and, therefore, it is not of works, but through faith, which is a soul-humbling, self-emptying grace, and a gift of God's royal bounty, which he bestows at pleasure. Rom. iii. 27. After the apostle has clearly laid down the true gospel way of guilty sinners' justification and salvation, through the alone righteousness of Christ, imputed in a way of believing, he asks, "Where is boasting then?" and answers, "It is excluded; not by the law of works, but by the law of faith." All boasting is entirely excluded by that method which God has established; and hence, we may, with abundant evidence, conclude that that doctrine which affords any room for glorying and boasting is not of God, being directly contrary to the plan and design of the gospel.

Having now, I think, with great clearness, from God's word of truth, proved the doctrine of absolute, unconditional

election, I proceed, in the next place, to prove, that those of guilty mankind, whom God did not thus choose to everlasting life and salvation through Christ, he determined to leave in their guilty state, and inflict upon them their deserved punishment. And upon this branch of predestination I need be but short, because it is abundantly proven already by the proof of the former; for the one is a necessary consequence of the other. If God determined to deal with guilty mankind in such a sovereign way as has been proved, making his own righteous, sovereign pleasure, the only rule of procedure towards them, then it necessarily follows, that such as he did not ordain to life, he did ordain to deserved death. To suppose an absolute and certain election of a part of guilty sinners to be redeemed and saved, and yet, that the rest are not reprobated or rejected, are very inconsistent notions; for, seeing all mankind were looked upon and considered by God, in his decrees, as under a righteous sentence of condemnation to punishment for their sin, then, sure, such as he did not determine to deliver out of that condemnation and ruin, were left in it, to suffer the law. To say, "that they were all elected conditionally, though the others were absolutely," is as contrary to those scriptures which have been adduced, as to deny an absolute election altogether; for they assert election to be universally absolute, contrary to such a distinction of a two-fold election. It is a notion, especially contrary to those passages which declare the absoluteness of effectual calling in all those that are so called; and those passages which declare, that all that are saved, are saved in such a

way as excludes all self-glorying and self-depending. But I proceed to offer a few other proofs from the scripture, for the confirmation of this head. And, first, I argue thus: those who are not given in charge by the Father to Jesus Christ, to be redeemed and saved by him, were left in their sins, and ordained to suffer the law for them themselves.

But those who were not certainly elected to salvation, were not given in charge by the Father to Jesus Christ, to be redeemed and saved by him: therefore, they were left in their sins, and ordained to suffer the law for them themselves. That those, who were not certainly elected to salvation, were not given in charge by the Father to Jesus Christ, to be redeemed and saved by him, is plain from this, that all those who were given in charge to Jesus Christ, to be redeemed and saved by him, shall certainly be saved by him; and were certainly and infallibly ordained to be so. This is clearly proved from the words of Christ: "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." John vi. 38, 39. These words, I think, plainly say, that all such as are not in the end actually saved by Jesus Christ, if he be faithful to his trust, were not committed to his charge, to be redeemed by him, and consequently they were left under the condemnatory sentence of the law.

Another proof, that those whom God has not absolutely

elected to salvation, he has left to perish, and abandoned from his saving care, you have in Rom. xi. 7, where, after the apostle has said, that the remnant of Israel, which God had reserved to himself, according to the election of grace, had obtained righteousness and life; he adds, "and the rest were blinded." Very full and express to the same purpose are those words, "Christ is a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed." 2 Pet. ii. 8. God appointed to leave them to blindness, stumbling, and disobedience; which things are always consequent upon God's leaving any to themselves.

This doctrine of sinners' rejection or reprobation in the eternal purpose of God, is indeed, I acknowledge, a very awful and solemn one; especially to those who do not find in them the comfortable evidences of election; and might reasonably excite in them a deep concern about the great concerns of their souls, and stir them up to take no peaceful rest, till they find in themselves the hopeful tokens of God's electing love, in a supernatural work of renewing, sanctifying grace in their souls. But then let us take care, that we do not charge God foolishly and wickedly in the case, as if he were cruel and unrighteous. What, if God was willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, upon the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, and worthy of death, who can justly find fault with him? What, if he had reprobated all apostate mankind, as well as all apostate angels, who could say, he had done wrong?

Every mouth must have been stopped, all the world being guilty before him.

But I come to speak to the objections, commonly urged from the scriptures against the foregoing doctrine, in both its branches. And here I shall first take notice of the method which those on the other side of the question, put a main confidence in, for the overthrowing of this doctrine, by going about to prove a universal redemption; that Christ died equally for all, and every individual of mankind; for one as much as another. This, they think, they can very easily prove from such places of scripture, as speak of his dying "for all men; for all the world; for the whole world; for every man;" and the like. But these universal expressions of scripture will not amount to sufficient proof of what they bring them for, for all so plain as they think they are for them. If such universal terms of scripture must of necessity be understood in such a large extent as they might seem to carry in them, we shall then as easily prove many other things from scripture which no man of common sense will beleive to be intended in it. For instance, as readily and plainly as they will prove that Christ laid down his life for every individual person of Adam's race; as plainly, I say will I prove that every individual person of Adam's race will have praise from God at the day of Judgment; from 1 Cor. iv. 5, where the apostle says, "Then shall every man have praise of God." As plainly and fully will I prove, that after John the Baptist's preaching every individual of mankind pressed into the kingdom of God; from Luke

xvi. 16, "Since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it." And by the same rule you may have it proved that every human creature spoke of the faith of the Christians at Rome. "*Your* faith is spoken of throughout the *whole world.*" Rom. i. 8. These few examples, instead of great numbers which might be produced, are sufficient to show that such universal terms in scripture must be often understood under very great restrictions; and quite in another sense than our opponents will allow, when they are used concerning the death of Christ. Some of those places of scripture, where such universal terms are used, concerning Christ's death, and the effect of it, only signify the virtue and efficacy of it, to those who partake of the benefits of it. Some others signify that his death was designed promiscuously for some of all nations, and all ranks and conditions of men, as not confined to any one particular nation, or degree of mankind. Others again only mean, that Christ is the only Saviour, that none are saved but through his death. In the first sense, we are to understand Rom. v. 18. The design of that whole chapter is to show that Christ's death and satisfaction is of *sufficient* virtue for the justifying and saving of the most guilty sinners. For this purpose the apostle observes the efficacy of Adam's sin, and breaking the law, to the condemning of those to whom it was charged and imputed, declaring that much more is Christ's fulfilling the law effectual to the complete justification of those to whom it is imputed, notwithstanding their former condemnation. And so, when he says, that "as by the

offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation: even so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life," his meaning is, that as the offence and disobedience of Adam prevailed to the condemning of those to whom it reached, and was imputed, even so the righteousness of Christ was sufficiently effectual to the full justification of those to whom it was imputed, from the guilt of that offence, and all others, so as to entitle them again to eternal life. So that the apostle's design is not at all to run a parallel between Adam's offence and Christ's righteousness, in the extent of their influence and effects; but to compare the one with the other, as to the efficacy of their influence; in respect of which he observes that Christ's righteousness is much superior, as it justifies to life, even after Adam's sin has condemned to death. And thus the phrase, "all men," in both parts of the verse, is to be understood with this limitation, viz: all men on whom it came. In the first part of the verse, judgment came upon all men, on whom it came, to condemnation; *i. e.*, so as to condemn them. In the latter part, the free gift came upon all men, on whom it came, to justification of life; *i. e.*, so as to justify them to life. I presume, if every man had been in the text, instead of *all men*, the Universalists would have thought it every whit as strong for their purpose as they do now. And you may see how that this phrase must be understood the same way, Mark viii. 25,* where it is said of the man

* I accomodate myself here to those who understand only the English translation. The term in the original is in the plural number, all men

that had been blind, to whom Jesus Christ gave sight, that he saw *every* man clearly; which cannot be understood of the extent of his sight, that he saw every man that was in the world; but of the strength and efficacy of his sight, that he saw every man, whom he did see, clearly. It is indeed true, that by *the offence* of Adam, judgment came upon every individual of his posterity, except the human nature of Jesus Christ, to condemnation; and this verse is a clear and certain proof of it. But then, I conceive it is not the universality of the term here that proves it; it is as fully proved from the next verse as from this, where it is only said, that by his disobedience many were made sinners; because the imputation of his sin at all, is evidence enough that it is imputed to all and every one that descends from him in the ordinary way of generation; seeing his relation was the same to all, as the natural and common parent of the human race. But, farther, there is this plain reason, evincing that the universal term here must be understood in this limited sense, viz: because if it be understood in the large, extensive sense in which the Arminians will have it, it will prove a great deal too much for them, not a universal, conditional, redemption which they contend for, but a universal, absolute redemption and salvation. It will then prove that every individual of the human race is actually justified to eternal life, by the righteousness of Christ; and we are sure, that whom he justified, them he

as well as in Rom. v. 18. But it is as equal to the sense, which of the ways it is rendered.

also glorified, (Rom. viii. 30.) Thus you see the true sense of this text, and manifest design of the whole context, destroy all foundation of an argument for universal redemption.

The proper import and design of those words, (1 John ii. 2,) "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world," is, that the death of Christ was a propitiation, or atonement, not only for people among the Jews, or for those who were then believers in those parts of the world, but also for some, be they more or less, in all parts and ages of the world; for he was to be God's salvation unto the ends of the earth.

When the apostle says, (1 Tim. ii. 6,) that "Christ gave himself a ransom for all," it appears from the context, that he means persons of all ranks and degrees; for he brings it in as an argument to enforce his exhortation to pray for kings, and *all* that are in authority. The same universal term he manifestly intends in the same sense, in the first verse, when he says, "I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men." He cannot mean, sure, that they should pray for the millions of men that were dead, and gone to their own place before that time. Neither can he intend, that they should pray for such as the apostle John excludes from an interest in our prayers, (1 John v. 16): "There is a sin unto death: I do not say, that a man shall pray for it;" that is, for such as are guilty of it. But he explains his meaning to be for men of all stations and degrees, the high as well as the low,

adding, "for kings, and all that are in authority." When the apostle says, (Heb. ii. 9,) that "Christ tasted death for every man," the meaning is, for every man that is saved; to signify, that *none* are saved but through Christ's death, that his death is the *only purchase* of salvation for any man. In the same limited manner we must understand the same term, (Col. i. 28,) "We preach Christ, warning *every man*, and teaching *every man*," that is, warning and teaching every man to whom we have an opportunity to preach. So, (1 Cor. iv. 5,) "When the Lord comes to judgment, *every man* shall have praise of God;" that is, every man that is saved, or has been truly godly. Another place of scripture, which is brought in to serve the cause of universal redemption, is, (2 Pet. ii. 1,) where the apostle speaks of some who should privily bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. But the apostle only speaks of the Lord's having bought them, as what might have been hoped concerning them as well as others. The gospel revelation of a Saviour that died to redeem sinners, affords ground to all to whom it comes, to hope that his death might have been designed for them as well as others, (though it was not intended for all and every one alike,) seeing it does not point out the persons, in particular, for whom he did not intend the benefits of his death. And so, concerning these persons here, the apostle mentions it as a high aggravation of their crime, that they should *deny* that Redeemer, of whom they had no reason to conclude to the contrary but that he had bought and

redeemed them, when they had the same ground of hope this way that any others had, before they had the special evidences of it in renewing grace.

Thus I have considered some of the most material passages of Scripture which are advanced in favour of universal redemption; and I think any considerate person might see, from what has been said, that they come far short of answering the design they are advanced for; and any other passages of the like strain are to be understood the same way. I have already mentioned a place of Scripture, (John vi. 39,) which proves that all those who were given to Christ to redeem, he will surely save, and finally glorify, unless it may be said he was unfaithful to his charge; for it was "the will of him that sent him, that he should lose none of them, but raise them up again at the last day," and so put the finishing stroke to their full glorification; which confirms a particular redemption, in opposition to a universal. In the tenth chapter of John our Lord speaks of a peculiar people, which he had both among the Jews and Gentiles, whom he calls his sheep; for whom, he says, he laid down his life. And, (John xvii,) he speaks of those whom the Father had given him, as distinct from the rest of mankind. For these, he says, he prays, and not for the world, ver. 9; and, ver. 19, he says, "For their sakes I sanctify myself;" that is, it is for their sakes that I set myself apart to the office and charge of a Redeemer, and devote myself to be a sacrifice.

I shall only farther point out, as briefly as may be, some absurdities attending the doctrine of universal redemption,

and so dismiss it. If God sent his Son to die for sinners, with an equal view and design to save them all by it, intending as much the salvation of one as another, without any difference, then it will follow, that those who are saved are no more beholden or obliged to God than those who perish; and it was not from him that they were saved any more than others, but from themselves; and so he shall not have the glory of it; nay, he is rather beholden to them, for letting him have his end. Again, it will follow, that God, in a great measure, comes short of obtaining his end and design, and that in the greatest affair that ever he undertook, so far as we are acquainted; an end which he was so intent upon, that he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to the death, that he might obtain it. The end which he was intently set upon, was the salvation of all the human race; and yet he is greatly disappointed of it, for great numbers for ever perish. Now, how can any man reasonably persuade himself, that God really proposed to himself, and intended such an end, and yet did not make it sure, and ascertain the attainment of it? Was it not easy to his power to do it? Has he not the hearts of all men in his hands? Would it have done them any injustice to have persuaded them by almighty power, and made them willing to be happy? But seeing he has not done so, it is plain that the salvation of all was not the end and design he had in view in sending his Son into the world to die. Would he have left a design he had so much at heart, upon the precarious bottom (to say the best of it that they can say) of the free-will of corrupted crea-

tures, that were no way well affected toward him, but awfully disaffected? Nay, farther, it will follow, that it might have so happened as that he would have entirely lost his end altogether; for all so seriously as he intended it, and was set upon it, yet it seems he did not make it certain; no, not as to the salvation of any one soul, but left it altogether to themselves. One would think by this, that he was not very intent upon it, for all the great pretences of some, by this doctrine, to magnify his love and good-will to men. And it may be considered which doctrine magnifies the love of God most—that which renders the salvation of a considerable number infallibly certain, or that which leaves it altogether uncertain as to any, leaving it entirely to the good pleasure of their depraved wills? I believe it will be found that more will be saved in that way, than would have been in this; for, I think, upon this score, none at all would be saved. However, it is plain that great multitudes do finally oppose and contradict this supposed intention of God; and what hinders but all the rest might do so too, according to the universal scheme; and not so much as one be saved after all? for all are alike opposite to the way of salvation by nature. But you will say, perhaps, there was no danger of such a disappointment and frustration of God's end as this, for he foreknew who would comply with the gospel, and be saved, and so knew that he would not altogether fail of his design. But this is so far from clearing the doctrine, that it introduces a new absurdity; for how can it be conceived that God could really intend and design the death of Christ, and the

benefit of it, for those who he infallibly knew would never be partakers of it? Is it not an absurdity, may not I say impossibility, in the very nature of the thing? To what purpose was the death of Christ designed for them, or for what advantage? Not to save them, for that the Lord knew would never be. And every designing of an end includes in it some degree of expectation, which could not be in this case. Was it to purchase sufficient grace for them, that so they might be saved if they would? Well, but the Lord knew that they would not make the saving use of it; and why then was it intentionally purchased for them? Sure, you will not say it was to make their guilt and punishment the greater. Let the admirers of universal redemption consider a little, how they will digest and solve these things. But to proceed,

The opposers of the doctrine of absolute decrees argue farther against it, from some places of scripture, which they suppose declare a general will and desire in God of the conversion and salvation of all sinners, and how much he would be pleased with it; which they suppose is contrary to his having purposed not to give to some the grace necessary and sufficient for their conversion, but to leave them to perish in their sins. I shall a little consider the principal passages which they advance to this purpose, and shew that they intend nothing contrary to this doctrine. One of them is (1 Tim. ii. 4,) "God will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." If all men, here be understood for every individual man in the world, then God's willing them to be saved, cannot

mean his having willed and purposed that they shall be saved; for then they all would be saved, because he can easily fulfill all his purposes, and surely will do so. "For his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure." Isa. xlvi. 10. "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations." Psa. xxxiii. 11. But if the words be taken in this unlimited sense, the meaning of the place must only be, that the salvation of all men, in the way of faith and holiness, would be a thing very agreeable to the approving and preceptive will of God, as he delights in holiness, and the happiness which is connected with it; and that sin, for which it is that any perish, is disagreeable and hateful to his holy nature; and yet, all this is no way inconsistent with his determining to punish sinners for their sin. But I think it is plain, from the context, that by all men here, we are to understand, men of all characters and degrees; for the words are brought in as an argument to encourage christians to pray for kings, and for all that are in authority. And in the same sense, the term all men is intended in the first verse, as I have made appear before.

Another place is (2 Pet. iii. 9), "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise; but is long suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." I think it is pretty manifest, that the persons the apostle speaks of here, are the elect of God; the persons to whom he writes these epistles, are considered under that character. In his first epistle, (chap. i. 2,) he calls them "elect, according to the foreknowledge of God

the Father, through the sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and to the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." And in the first verse of this chapter we are informed that he writes this second epistle to the same, or same sort of persons; and of the same he speaks in the verse under our present consideration, joining himself, as being also an elect person with them; saying, "The Lord is long suffering to us-ward;" *i. e.*, towards us, the election of his grace, not willing that any, viz: of us, should perish, but that we all should come to repentance, and be called in. The apostle's design, in the words, is to show the reason of God's delaying to put an end to the present state of this world, and bring on the general judgment; in answer to the scoffers, that he says should be in the last days, saying, "Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." Ver. 3, 4. In answer, I say, to these atheistical scoffs, he observes that God had done as great, unlikely, and unexpected things already, as the shutting up the scene of this world in such a solemn manner, though they wilfully neglected to take notice of them. He had not only, by the word of his power, created the heavens and the earth out of nothing at first, but a long time after had destroyed the earth and its ungodly inhabitants by a flood of water; and so it was no incredible, nor unlikely thing, that he should, at last, burn it with fire at the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men; and notwithstanding it had stood so long, in much the same state, after the people of God had spoke

of this, as what would surely be, he observes that a long space of time with us is but little with God; and then says, "the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, (as some men count slackness,) but is long suffering to us-ward, &c.;" that is, the Lord's deferring the end of the world and last judgment so long, is not through forgetfulness or careless neglect of his promise to that purpose; but the true reason of it is, that all his elect may be brought in, not being willing that any of them should perish, but that all should come to repentance, be converted and saved; and therefore he will not come to judgment at a time when there are any of them on the earth unconverted, nor until the last of the whole number is fitted for glory.

There is another scripture that is always brought in upon this head of argument, (Ezek. xxxiii. 11,) where the Lord declares, with the solemnity of an oath, "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live." When the Lord says he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, the plain sense of the words is, that the death and misery of sinners is not a pleasure to him in itself, or for its own sake, merely as it is a misery to the creature. But this does not say, but that their death and punishment may be agreeable and pleasing to him under other considerations; as it is an execution of justice, and manifestation of his own glory. If it were not so, would he inflict punishment upon any of them? Would he displease and make himself uneasy? And when he says that it is a pleasure to him, that the wicked turn from his way, and

live, the meaning is, that righteousness and holiness in his creatures, and the happiness consequent upon it, is the object of his approbation and liking, a thing in itself agreeable and pleasing to his holy nature. But this, sure, is no proof that he equally and alike designed the sanctification and salvation of all sinners. If it proved anything this way, it would prove that he designed it certainly for them all, if his power could effect it.

The words of our Lord, (Matt. xxiii. 37,) are often brought in upon this head, where he says of Jerusalem, "How often would I have gathered thy children, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" If we understand the Lord Jesus to speak here of his willingness to have gathered them, with reference to his divine nature, as God, the words only prove, that sinners' compliance with the gospel, and turning to holiness, is a thing in itself agreeable and pleasing to God's holy nature: holiness being the object of his love and complacence; that his dealings with that people, in the course of his ministry among them, tended in their own nature to bring them thus to duty; and that their unbelief and impenitency was owing to the perverseness and corruption of their own wills, as the cause of it. But if we suppose him to speak of his willingness merely as man, in his human nature, then I see no inconvenience in allowing that it might signify an intense and passionate desire in him of their conversion and happiness. But, surely, no such passions, or uneasy long desires, and especially for things which will never be effected, are to be

ascribed to the divine nature. For my part, I cannot apprehend what sort of a will and desire for the conversion and salvation of all men, it is, which those who deny absolute predestination, suppose to be in God, any way consistent with his perfections. They suppose it includes much more than that the holiness and happiness of his creatures is a thing in itself lovely and agreeable to him; that it is his preceptive and approving will that they should be holy, and consequently happy: which is very consistent with the doctrine they oppose, from this topic of a general will; and they cannot allow it to include so much as a real purpose that all shall be sanctified and saved; because then all would be so, which is contrary to fact, or else God's purpose would be frustrated, and he would come short of what he certainly intended would come to pass, which is highly absurd. But they seem to fancy a sort of an uneasy wishing and longing desire in God for that which, notwithstanding, will never be; and if this be not to make God such a one as ourselves, I know not what is. Does it not argue God to be subject to the weaknesses of creatures? And not only so, but that he suffers himself to be made uneasy, and to be crossed in his desires by that which he could easily prevent, which is what no wise man would allow in himself; and, therefore, though God may sometimes condescend to speak to sinners in such language as they use to one another, when they would express the greatness and ardency of their desire for anything, yet we are not hence to imagine that there are any such human passions and creature-weaknesses in

him. The design of such modes of speaking in God, is only to signify how desirable and excellent a thing it is in itself, for creatures to love, to obey and honour him, and how much it is both their interest and duty to do so. And the reason why this is expressed in such a manner as imports weak passions in men when they speak so, is because it is the most suitable way of dealing with such creatures as we are, best adapted to our capacity and condition; it is a method that has the most suitable tendency in itself to work upon and prevail with rational creatures, expressing best to their capacity the excellency and necessity of holiness, and the horrid, hateful nature of sin; for, though it is the supernatural power of God's Spirit that prevails with any sinners to be holy, yet, as a wise agent, he makes use of the most suitable and best adapted means for that purpose, dealing with men in a way suited to their rational nature and human capacities. Thus it is we are to understand the various expostulations and entreaties of God in the scriptures.

As another topic of argument against the doctrine of God's decrees, the opposers of it seem to think that all men have sufficient power to do that which is required as necessary to salvation, and with which salvation is certainly connected; or, at least, that they have sufficient power to ensure to themselves such supernatural power as is necessary for that purpose; and this is what is commonly called universal, sufficient grace. For the support of this opinion they refer to such passages of scripture, in which God commands all men where the gospel comes, to be holy

as he is holy, to repent and believe in Jesus Christ, to make themselves new hearts, &c. Hence they argue that all have power some way to do these things, because, they say, it would be unjust for God to require more of men than they can perform. To this I answer, that these men seem entirely to overlook, in this way of reasoning, the ruin brought upon the human offspring by the fall and apostasy of Adam, the covenant-head and representative of all mankind. He, indeed, until he sinned, was furnished with sufficient ability to do whatsoever God did or ever should require of him; at least, had he not sinned, his ability would always have been increased equally with his obligations; there was a full proportion between his power and the law he was under. And so it would have been with all his posterity, had he fulfilled the conditions of the covenant; but as, by his transgression, they lost all right and title to that happiness, and life of communion with God, which was secured to them in the covenant, upon his obedience, so they lost God's moral image, and the power of holy obedience; and it was at God's free, sovereign pleasure to confer happiness again, and the grace necessary to it, as he pleased. And as God then was under no obligation to afford strength answerable to the law, so neither was he obliged to bring down the requirements of his law to the level and capacity of the fallen, ruined creature. Though man, by his own default, has lost his power of obedience, that is no argument that God must lose his right and claim; the creature's sin and wretchedness thereby, cannot dissolve his obligations of duty to God; God's law

must still remain the same, as a perfect and eternal rule of righteousness, let creatures change and alter as they will. If it be asked, for what end the law of God is set before us, and his commandments laid upon us in his word, if we have not ability to fulfil? I answer, for various ends; to teach us what is our duty to God; what we ought to be aiming at, and endeavouring after; to show us our sins and transgressions, "for by the law is the knowledge of sin," (Rom. iii. 20,) as the crookedness of a line is discovered by laying it to a straight one; to teach us our utter inability to fulfil the law, and obtain life for our obedience; for which purpose our Saviour referred one to the keeping of the commandments, (Matt. xix. 17,) whom he found big with the conceit that he could do much; that so we may see our necessity of getting righteousness and strength from Christ, a mediator; and thus the law is given as a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. It is a means whereby the Lord brings in his elect to the Redeemer by faith; and it is given as a rule of life to the renewed children of God, to direct them how they are to honour and glorify him.

If it be objected to the above account of sinners' inability to do what is now required of them under the dispensation of the new covenant, that Adam had not the power of believing in a Redeemer, or repenting and renewing his heart, as having no need of it, and the exercise of it being inconsistent with his state of innocence; and therefore we cannot be said to have lost it in him, seeing it was not given him while he stood in the character of our representative—to this it may be easily replied,

that though he had not his power for such acts and purposes as these, in his innocent state; yet, had we, in our guilty state, that power restored which he had, we would be able to believe in the Redeemer, to repent, &c. The impossibility of his putting forth such acts, was not from the want of inherent power, but the inconsistency of them with his condition. It was inconsistent with his state of innocence, to have any occasion for administering physic, to recover his health; yet this is no argument that he had not sufficient ability for it.

I would just farther refer it to the consideration of those who offer this argument against God's decrees, and yet, in the meantime, acknowledge that no man in this life can fulfil the law of God perfectly, how they are consistent with themselves: for herein themselves acknowledge that God requires more of men than they can now perform, since the fall; and, sure, they will not own it is so, and say it is unjust too.

For further proof of this universal power, or grace, they urge the invitations of the gospel to believe in Christ, and its promises to such as do believe. Such as (Isa. xiv. 22), "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth:" and (Rev. iii. 20), "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him," &c. Such invitations, they think, infer that there is a power in man to comply with them, otherwise they would be vain and needless. But this is a vain argument. For, though sinners are without strength, through the darkness of their minds, and obstinacy of

their wills; yet such invitations are needful, to show them their duty, and the only way in which they can ever be happy; and to afford them a ground and warrant for believing in Jesus Christ, and resting their souls upon him for salvation. By these invitations, and promises to believing, the Holy Spirit encourages and persuades convinced souls to close with Christ, as their Saviour, and cast themselves upon his mediation and atonement, with humble, joyful confidence. The Spirit of God, by his power, brings a sinner to believe in Christ, in a way agreeable to his nature, as a reasonable creature; and so make use of the offers and promises of the gospel, as the soul's warrant for laying claim to Christ, as his Saviour, and believing in him for his salvation. Likewise, these invitations and promises are of great use for the comfort of true believers, showing there is a sure connection between believing and salvation. When Moses tells the people of Israel (Deut. xxx. 19), "that he had set life and death before them, blessing and cursing, and bids them choose life;" the words may be easily understood in the same sense with the fore-mentioned passages, to signify that there is a certain and inseparable connection between true holiness and eternal life, though this holiness is the effect of a supernatural divine power, exerted only in whom the Lord pleases: and the Lord proposes this holiness, which is connected with happiness, to sinners' choice, to import the reasonableness and necessity of their choosing it; and that he may deal with them in a way agreeable to the nature of reasonable beings. But yet, I think it is

plain from the context, that the life and death there spoken of was temporal prosperity and adversity; which life was promised to that people, upon their strict adherence to the outward prescriptions of the law that was given them: and it will be readily owned that they might thus choose and perform obedience without special renewing grace: and, in this sense, righteousness and life are to be frequently understood in the Old Testament.

It is farther argued, for this universal grace, from the parable of the talents (Matt. xxv.) But we are not to understand by these talents, universal, sufficient grace, whereby all men are enabled to convert themselves, if they will, and savingly to renew and change their wills; but other gifts and bounties of divine Providence, such as natural endowments of mind, good education, health, worldly goods, outward gospel privileges, and the like, which God distributes to mankind in various measures, as he pleases. Those who made such improvement of their talents, signify the truly godly, who are effectually renewed by God's power, according to his purpose. The person that made no improvement, signifies unconverted sinners who do not sincerely love and honour God. The account taken of these servants at their Lord's return, and his different retributions to them, according to their past conduct, are designed to teach us that the Lord Jesus will surely come at last to judgment, that we must all appear before his judgment-seat, to give an account of the deeds done in this life, and that our past behaviour here, both in heart and outward practice, will be the rule according to

which the sentence of judgment will pass upon us. Though the reward of happiness to the godly will not be given them for their godliness, as the cause of it; yet it will be given to them only, who have been thus qualified and fore-prepared by the Lord for it; and that in different degrees, according to their different degrees of care, zeal, and diligence in the ways of God, after their conversion. On the other hand, all the ungodly shall be condemned to punishment according to the demerit of their works; and to different degrees of punishment, according to their deserts. And thus, the works, the dispositions, and conduct of men in this life, will be the rule according to which the final awards will be made at the last day to all mankind, though not the meritorious or procuring cause of them to all, but only to the wicked. These things I take to be the very scope and design of the parable; and so the universal men have no service at all to their cause from it. It is mere trifling to ask, as some do, if the servant that was punished, had made as good use of his talent, as the rest did of theirs, would he not have been as well accepted? That is, whether finally impenitent sinners would not have been accepted by Jesus Christ, as well as true believers, and sincerely godly persons, had they been true believers, and sincerely godly as well as they? I am free enough to answer in the affirmative. Had they been such, it would have been a certain evidence that they had been elected to holiness and salvation, as well as the others; for true justifying and sanctifying faith is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God, given according to his pur-

pose and grace, which was made sure to all believers in Christ Jesus, before the world began. But then the question does not at all touch the matter in debate, viz: whether unrenewed sinners have had a sufficient inward grace given them to be true believers and godly persons, as those who are really such. Considering that sinners' impotency consists chiefly in their enmity, their inability, in the opposition of their wills to God's will, I think it is plain that no grace is sufficient, but that which is actually effectual. Their wills are not just *in equilibrio*, in an even balance between holiness and sin, as much inclined to the one side as the other, so as that they might bring their wills to a compliance with, and complacence in, the ways of God, by their own reason; or by the help of some divine assistances, which they might also reject: but their wills are strongly set against the new covenant way of salvation, and the holy law of God, in its spiritual nature and extent; and therefore, "no man can come unto Christ, except the Father draw him." John vi. 44.

Again, they argue in another method from the general calls, invitations, and offers of the gospel, reasoning after this manner. It would, say they, be the highest instance of dissembling and deceit for God to call sinners to repent and turn from their evil ways, with such appearance of real sincerity and earnestness, if he had before infallibly decreed that a great many of them should not repent and turn (not to communicate the grace of conversion and repentance to many, it should be). And what greater insincerity and illusion, say they, can well be imagined than

for God to make such a general, unlimited offer of Christ, and salvation through him, as (Rev. xxii. 17), "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely;" when he has already purposed not to give salvation to many? How can such an open declaration agree with such a secret purpose? Would there not be a direct opposition between his outward expressions and inward sentiments, which is downright falsifying and hypocrisy?

But all this plausible reasoning, on which some of the greatest patrons of the Arminian scheme bestow a great deal of eloquence, is grounded upon a mistaken apprehension of the nature and true import of these calls and gospel offers. God's calls to sinners to repent and turn to him, to believe in Christ, &c., are only so many significations of what is sinners' duty, and what is agreeable to God's holy nature, pleasing and approvable in his sight. The calls do not signify what is God's purpose concerning men, but what is their duty to him, and that he loves holiness in his creatures, that the righteous Lord loves righteousness. And so, in all such calls and commands, there is an entire agreement between God's words and his will signified by them; for he does, indeed, will these things, as the matter of sinners' duty, and loves them as agreeable to his own holy law. This just view of the many calls of God in the scripture to sinners, for their repentance and conversion to holiness, destroys all the force of the argument taken from them, as though they were inconsistent with God's secret will and purpose to leave many in their sins without converting grace, for they import nothing in

their true design contrary to it. And when God condescends to use arguments and expostulations with sinners about what he requires, it is that he may deal with them as reasonable beings, and convert his elect in a way agreeable to their rational nature.

As to the offers of Christ made to all where the gospel comes, and promises of salvation, through him, to all such as truly believe in him. It is most certain, that God does will and purpose to save all such as truly accept of his Son Jesus Christ, and believe in him, as he is proposed and set forth in the gospel revelation of him, for he declares that all such shall be saved. But then, we are to consider this faith in Christ as the gift of God, according to Eph. ii. 8, and a grace of his powerful operation or working, (Col. ii. 12, Eph. i. 19, 2 Thess. i. 11,) bestowed only upon, and wrought only in those whom he has chosen, and, therefore, called the faith of God's elect, (Tit. i. 1.) And thus, the promises of the gospel run exactly parallel with the election of grace, and do not import anything contrary to it. Indeed, to say that God does not really design to save all who shall believe in Christ, notwithstanding he has declared that he will, were to impute the grossest falsehood and deceit to him; but there is no such thing in the doctrine which the argument is brought against. It is true, the offer of Christ as a Saviour is made to all, to be accepted and believed in, for their salvation in particular, wherever the news of the gospel-salvation is sent. But then, this offer does not signify or import that God designed him and the saving benefits of his death equally for all,

but that, inasmuch as all have equal need of him, and God has not revealed or any way pointed out who they are whom he has not chosen to salvation through him, so as they might be known either to themselves or others, it is the great duty of all to accept of him with all their hearts, according to the declarations concerning him in the gospel, freely and willingly to comply with the way of salvation through his atonement, casting a fiducial dependence upon him, and him only, for their eternal life; for which faith the infallible promise of salvation to all such as so receive him, is sufficient warrant and encouragement. And it was necessary that the offer should be thus universal, when it was not revealed who, in particular, was elected to salvation through him, that so the elect might be brought to believe in him, upon a rational ground and foundation; for they could not know that they were chosen to life through him, more than any others, before their believing, and, therefore, could not have had a ground for faith to go upon, were it not for the promise to whosoever believes, and the declarations that it is every one's duty cordially to comply, and be pleased with that way of salvation, through an atoning Mediator; and, upon the encouragement of this promise, to cast a reliance, and the whole dependence of their souls for salvation upon him. In this manner it is that the offers of Christ in the gospel are general and universal, not importing that he died alike for all, or that he was equally designed for all, in the purpose of God; but that, seeing none have any reason certainly to conclude against themselves that they were rejected in the divine

purpose; and, seeing acceptance and eternal life, through Christ, is promised to all that believe, it is the duty of all, with their whole hearts, to embrace him as he is proposed, and believe in him; and yet none will so believe in him but the chosen of God, who are called according to his purpose. And thus, as God is entirely consistent with himself in the case, so are the ministers of the gospel consistent with themselves in maintaining God's absolute decrees, and yet making such general offers of Christ, as a Saviour, to all that hear them, calling upon them to accept of and believe in him, using arguments with them for that purpose, and promising life and salvation, in his name, to all that truly comply with the gospel and believe in him. And though they do not know the elect of God among their hearers, he does and will apply this gospel to their hearts, so as to bring them to believe in Christ, and become truly godly. These considerations, if duly weighed and attended to, I think may be abundantly satisfactory in this case.

There is another argument, commonly insisted on by those on the other side of the question, taken from God's appointment of a gospel ministry, ordinances of worship, and means of grace in his church, as if they were altogether vain and useless, on supposition of such eternal decrees. According to the Calvinist doctrine of predestination, say they, "It is quite needless for ministers to preach, and as needless for people to hear, or to perform any religious duty whatsoever; and the reason is, because they cannot alter the purpose of God concerning them, whatever it be, do they well or ill; they will fare as well,

let them live as they list, as if they did ever so well; and so they had even as good take their swing: nay, it had been much better for all the reprobate, that they had never had the privileges of the gospel; because, according to the scripture, the condemnation and misery of those that perish, will be much aggravated by it."

This is an awful charge, indeed; and if it be just, the doctrine is certainly most unsufferable, which takes off all restraints from the most profligate course of life, farther than what proceed from our temporal interest in this world; and arguments from private temporal interest do often sway more to the most inhuman crimes than moral honesty. But I hope to make it appear that the objection is most false and groundless. And to this purpose let these few things be considered:

First, Supposing there were no arguments for a pious, godly life, to be had from our own eternal interest; yet there are reasons of another nature, of sufficient weight and force in themselves, to induce us to it, and engage us to endeavour after it. Is not the great God, who is infinitely good and glorious, worthy of the greatest esteem, profoundest subjection, and highest adoration of all the rational creation? And has he not an inviolable right and claim to these things from us, as our Creator and Preserver? And is not conformity to God, and to obey and honour him, the greatest honour and glory of a created being? These arguments, I know, have little weight with apostate creatures whose understandings are darkened, and all their other faculties wholly corrupted; but that is not

for want of sufficient weight in their own nature: nothing can ever dissolve God's title to the homage and obedience of his creatures.

Secondly, I would have two or three particulars considered and weighed together: First, that the elect are elected to salvation, "through the sanctification of the Spirit;" "whom he did predestinate, them he also called." And this effectual calling, and sanctifying grace, wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit, is the certain fruit and evidence of eternal election; whereby those who are the partakers of this grace, may, and frequently do, come to a comfortable satisfaction, as to their election of God.

Again, you are to observe, that the elect themselves, before their conversion and effectual calling, have no notices or evidences at all of their being elected, more than others; which must needs be a very uneasy and distressing condition, when the Spirit of God touches the conscience. And then, in the next place, let it be considered, that God has appointed the preaching of the gospel, and other religious exercises, such as reading the holy scriptures, and other good books, prayer, &c., to be the means whereby he ordinarily converts and sanctifies his elect, and affords them the comfortable tokens of his electing love. He has appointed these ordinances and means as the ordinary channels wherein to communicate his special grace to those whom he has chosen. Now if these things be duly adverted to, I think, it will be clear, that there is use, and great use too, for the preaching of the gospel, and other exercises of religion, in a consistency

with God's absolute decrees: and that there are sufficient reasons to engage persons to a very careful observance of them, and of all the commands of God; for the ordinances of God are the means which he sees fit, in his wisdom, to make use of for the conversion and sanctification of his elect, which work of grace is the only evidence of our belonging to God, as his elect people: and therefore one can hardly think that any but such as are stupidly unconcerned about their soul's everlasting states, could reason in earnest in the strain of the objection I am now upon. Surely, one that is any way duly thoughtful about a matter of such vast moment as his eternal well-being, would readily think with himself to this purpose; "Oh! what would I not give to have some comfortable, distinguishing evidences of being chosen of God, and appointed to life; well, his ways and ordinances are the means he uses for this purpose; the channels in which he is wont to communicate his special grace to those he designs to save. I must wait upon and look to him in that way of hope, and keep at the pool where he uses to come and heal diseased souls; it may be he will some time meet with me, in his own way, which he has appointed for visiting his chosen, and fulfil in me all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power, and cause me to rejoice in his love. These ways of religion are not only the ways in which alone there is reasonable ground of hope to meet with such blessings, but they are the commands and institutions of God, recommended with his awful authority; and therefore, to disregard and

neglect them, will be to disobey and contemn God still more, and also will expose me to a more awful punishment." Consider now, if this be not a just and right way of reasoning in the case: nay, I am convinced that the Calvinist doctrine, rightly understood, and really believed, will make people much more careful, serious, and diligent observers of the ways of God, than the contrary doctrine will; for it tends much more to bring them to a solemn, solicitous concern of heart about their eternal state, and consequently to make them more earnest in all the most hopeful, probable ways of meeting with satisfaction about it.

Thirdly, Though it be true, that such as are rejected in the purpose of God will never be converted in the use of all the means of grace, yet, seeing they do not know the secret purpose of God concerning them, but have the same reason to entertain hopes that they may be chosen to life that any other unconverted persons have, it would be a high and provoking contempt of God for them to neglect the ordinances which he has appointed as means for the communicating special grace and sweet consolation to his elect, and which he, therefore, by his sovereign authority, requires all who have the opportunity, to attend upon; and they shall find it, if guilty of it, brought into the account against them at the great day, when every man shall be judged according to his works, and they shall receive, proportionally, the greater punishment.

Fourthly, As to the elect converted, their hearts are so renewed, as to love God above all, and to make obedience to his will their hearty choice. Believing in Jesus Christ,

his love is shed abroad in their hearts, and sweetly constrains them to serve and honour him to whom they are under such endearing engagements. The consideration of God's having elected them to eternal glory, when he might justly have rejected them as well as others; the hope and prospect of that eternal glory with him, and the consideration of his having sent his Son to answer the law for them, and suffer in their room, that they might be delivered from deserved misery and made happy in the enjoyment of himself for ever; their apprehensions of his glory and excellency in himself, and his right in and over them as his creatures; all these things are powerful arguments with them to love and praise God; it is their desire and delight to glorify and honour him. Moreover, the Lord Jesus takes them for his peculiar charge; it is a part of his office as mediator, to bring them safe to glory through all dangers; accordingly, his Holy Spirit dwells in them as a sanctifier and comforter; thus they are engaged to God in the way of holiness by the most inviolable cords and loving bands; so that the doctrine of absolute election is far from destroying holiness of life; it is a strong excitement to it, in all the renewed children of God, who love him when they are enabled to see the hopeful evidences of their own election. And, therefore, such as say (as some, no less wickedly than foolishly, do) that, "if they were persuaded of the truth of the doctrine of predestination, they would never be at any pains or care to serve God more," had just as good say plainly, they have no love to God, and that they are entire strangers to the nature of true goodness.

Fifthly, Consider the method of reasoning in the objection is such as you would not allow to be just in other cases of the like nature. Can you think it would have been just reasoning in kind Hezekiah to say, that becaue the Lord had ordained he should live fifteen years longer, (2 Kings xx. 6,) he had no more need of either food or physic? The prophet Isaiah was of another mind, when he ordered a lump of figs to be laid to the boil, (ver. 7.)

This shows us that God brings about his purposes in the use of suitable means, and that it is therefore necessary for us to observe them. Was ever anything more absolutely and positively fixed in the purpose of God than the time and manner of Christ's death? (John vii. 30, and viii. 59, Luke iv. 29, 30, John xi. 53, 54.) Was Paul so inconsistent with himself when, though God had told him that both he and all that were in the ship with him should be saved through all the hazards of the voyage, yet, when the shipmen were about to go off in a boat and leave the rest in the distress, he said to them, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved?" Acts xxvii. In a like manner, it may be as truly and reasonably said, that except the elect be converted and sanctified, they cannot be saved from hell, because of the certain connection God has made between the means and the end. And none have any reason to expect converting grace while they profanely neglect the means of grace.

As to the latter clause of the objection, that the non-elect who have had the opportunity of the gospel will be more miserable than if they had not, I answer, it is very

likely it will be so with the most of them. But then, I think if they improved the gospel as they might do, though they would not be converted and saved by it, yet they would not be the more, but, perhaps, the less miserable for it. If it be inquired, for what end the gospel is sent to such as God has not proposed to save, I answer, it is chiefly for the elect's sake that are among them, that thereby they may be brought in to Christ, and prepared for the heavenly glory.

I shall now conclude the answer to the whole objection, with a general remark or two. Seeing the doctrine in itself does not take away our obligations to a religious life, but affords sufficient motives and arguments for it, then it is no argument against the truth of the doctrine, though some ungodly men should abuse it to liberty to sin. Other doctrines of the gospel are liable to the same abuse as well as this. Thus, Paul observes, that some might be ready to infer from the gospel doctrine of justification, as he laid it down, that they might continue in sin that grace might abound (Rom. vi. 1); that some would be ready to object against him, that he made Christ the minister of sin, *i. e.*, one that gave liberty and encouragement to sin (Gal. ii. 17); and that some did actually affirm that he said, "Let us do evil that good may come," (Rom. iii. 8.) Again, the Lord Jesus who came to destroy the works of the devil, and purchase to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works, will have his end, though some men of corrupt minds should abuse his truth, to the awful aggravation of their guilt in the day of his appearing. And I think

we have little encouragement to go to the Arminian scheme for the advancement of true practical religion, if we consider what advancement this way it has produced since it came in fashion.

What is farther brought as an objection by some, I think, is hardly worth taking notice of, viz: that some will be apt to take occasion, from the doctrine of predestination, to live in a slothful negligence and security, from a presumption that they are elected, and so cannot miss of salvation: and others will be apt to fall into despair, from a fearful apprehension that they are not elected. As I hinted already, we are to distinguish between the abuse unreasonably made of a doctrine, and its natural tendency in itself. And what is there in this doctrine that leads to either of these wide extremes? How can it lead any to a groundless presumption and slothful negligence, when, according to it, none have reason to persuade themselves they are elected, until they are renewed and sanctified. And then they cannot be careless about the honour and obedience due to God? "How shall they that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Rom. vi. 2. All the gospel arguments to a life of holiness, and this, of their election, among the rest, do then effectually engage their hearts to it. Indeed, if they knew their election before their conversion, before they believed in Christ and loved God, no doubt they would abuse it to sloth and licentiousness, till God changed their hearts: but they have no sure evidence of their election till they are brought to a better disposition. And how can it bring any to desperation,

when they cannot know that they are not elected? For persons to conclude positively that they are appointed to destruction, is to conclude without reason, and a pretending to know the unrevealed secrets of God's breast.

Some think the words of the Lord Jesus, (Luke xix. 42,) are contrary to this doctrine; where he says of Jerusalem, "If thou hadst known, in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." Which words, they suppose, import that the inhabitants of that city had, before that time, had such inward assistance from God, as put it in their power to convert themselves; but which were then for ever withdrawn from them, for their abuse of them, so that their case was then beyond all hope. And in this same sense they suppose that all men have a day of grace, in some part of their life; or, as they rather choose to term it, a day of visitation. But this opinion is without any foundation in the text. How can the words signify that their day there spoken of, was a time in which they had sufficient inward grace, when they clearly imply that they did not so much as know the things that belonged to their peace in that day? The true import of our Lord's words is, that they had had, in that day of his public ministry among them, sufficient outward means of conviction that he was the true Messiah; sufficient to prevail with them, as rational creatures, to acknowledge and own him as such; notwithstanding of which they rejected and persecuted him and would in a little time put him to death; for which they should before long be punished with utter ruin, both

of their city and nation, as it follows in the next words. And so the words also signify, that there was less probability and reasonable hope of their being converted to God, after all such means had been so long quite lost upon them, than there was before, according to God's ordinary way of working.

And now I have gone through all the contrary arguments and objections of any consequence that I know of, and, upon the whole, must desire the careful reader seriously to look back and consider if the doctrine of absolute predestination, as it has been stated and represented, be not entirely agreeable to reason, clearly founded on scripture, and perfectly consistent with every part of it, and, consequently, a most certain truth of God. Let us not be wilfully resolved against admitting reasonable evidence, but quit ourselves like men, and use our understanding, with humble application to God, on whom all creatures are dependent, for a right judgment and a sound mind. Do not say you will not believe it, just because you do not like it. That is both the shame and crime of a reasonable being, and the greatest folly in the world; for if it be a truth, it will be so, whether you like it and believe it or not. And let us also consider what is the proper use and native tendency of the doctrine. And so, let us humbly lie low, as guilty criminals, before the foot-stool of God's sovereignty, acknowledging his right to dispose of us, for life or death, as he pleases. Let us not be stupidly easy in our minds, without the experience of supernatural, sanctifying grace in our hearts, the only evidence of our

election and means of solid comfort, "without which no man shall see the Lord." Let us seek and long for it in all the ways of God's commands and ordinances, where it is most likely to be found, and not treasure up greater loads of wrath to ourselves against the day of wrath, by disobedience to the great Lawgiver's authority. Let such of us as God has given the tokens of his special love unto, in our sanctification, give the glory and praise to him alone, and still endeavour to live answerable to the obligations of such wonderful, distinguishing love and grace. Let us give up all confidence in our own ability, and dependence on our own righteousness and good doings to entitle us to happiness, casting ourselves only on the mediation and atonement of the Son of God as he is revealed and proposed in the gospel, seeking for that living faith in him that brings joy and peace to the soul, that works by love and the freest obedience. Such as these are the things which this doctrine naturally leads to; and so it agrees to the great design of God in the new covenant, the illustration of the greatest glory of his free grace in the salvation of guilty sinners; whereas, the contrary scheme defaces and sinks it down. But God will have the glory, and it is fit he should: the whole glory, from first to last, he has secured to himself. As he laid the foundation of sinners' salvation in pure, free, and rich grace, so, at the last day, he will bring forth the headstone thereof with shouting, crying Grace, Grace unto it, (Zech. iv. 7.)

JOHN BLAIR.

The Rev. John Blair was a younger brother of the Rev. Samuel Blair. He was an alumnus of the Log College, and as a theologian, was not inferior to any man in the Presbyterian church, in his day. He was first settled in Pennsylvania, at Big Spring, (now Newville,) in the Cumberland valley, in the vicinity of Carlisle; but by reason of the hostile incursions of the Indians, his people were obliged to leave their rude habitations on the frontier, and to retreat into the more densely populated part of the colony. Mr. Blair, it would seem, never returned to the place whence he had been driven by the invasion of the savages, but upon the decease of his brother Samuel, he received and accepted a call to be his successor at Fagg's Manor, and that not only as pastor of the church, but also as teacher of the school which his brother had instituted in that place. In this important station he continued for nine years, and though not equal to his brother as an impressive preacher, as a scholar and as a theologian he was not inferior.

After the death of Dr. Finley, Mr. Blair was elected professor of theology, in the College of New Jersey, which appointment he accepted, and was at the same time elected vice-president, and until the arrival of Dr. Witherspoon, performed all the duties of president. The funds of the college not being adequate to support a professor of theology, distinct from the president; and it being known that Dr. Witherspoon was an orthodox and eminent theologian, who could consistently with his other duties teach theology, Mr. Blair judged it would be expedient for him to resign. Upon this, he re-

ceived a call to settle as pastor of a Presbyterian congregation in Wallkill, Orange Co., New York. Here he continued to labour in the duties of the ministry, until he was called away from the field by death, which occurred Dec. 8, 1771, when he was not more than fifty-one or fifty two years of age.

"John Blair was a judicious and persuasive preacher, and through his exertions, sinners were converted and the children of God edified. Fully convinced of the truth of the doctrine of grace, he addressed immortal souls with that warmth and power, which left a witness in every bosom. Though he sometimes wrote his sermons in full, yet his common mode of preaching, was by short notes, comprising the general outlines. His labours were too abundant to admit of more, and no more was necessary to a mind so richly stored with the great truths of religion. For his large family he amassed no fortune, but he left them what was infinitely better, a religious education, a holy example, and prayers which have been remarkably answered His disposition was uncommonly patient, placid, benevolent, disinterested and cheerful. He was too mild to indulge bitterness or severity, and he thought that the truth required little else but to be fairly stated and properly understood. Those who could not relish the savour of his piety, loved him as an amiable, and revered him as a great man. Though no bigot, he firmly believed that the Presbyterian form of government is most scriptural, and the most favourable to religion and happiness.

"In his last sickness, he imparted his advice to the congregation, and represented to his family the necessity of an interest in Christ. A few nights before he died, he said, 'Directly, I am going to glory! My Master calls me, I must be gone.'"

OBSERVATIONS ON REGENERATION.

BY THE REV. JOHN BLAIR.

As no truth is more interesting and important, so none has been more frequently and fully treated in a practical view, by pious writers, than the doctrine of regeneration. Many have, in this way, very excellently and largely described the happy change, which, by virtue of the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, takes place in the whole man. I have therefore no design at present to enter upon a full consideration of the subject, but shall only beg leave to make a few very brief observations; some of which have not been so particularly considered in practical treatises, but yet perhaps, may be of some use to assist in the right apprehension of, and tend to prevent mistakes about a doctrine, which lies so much at the foundation of all true religion.

Observation 1. Regeneration is the communication of a principle of spiritual life to the soul of a sinner, naturally dead in trespasses and sins, by the agency of the Holy Spirit.

I call it a principle, not only because it is a beginning of spiritual life, but especially, because it denotes a settled

determination of the mind, to right activity towards spiritual objects, under a moral consideration of them, whence results every right exercise of heart about divine things. It is the determination of the soul to a holy activity about God and divine things, or to such a kind of action, not from the impulsion of an external force, but an internal active principle, and therefore is justly called life—life of the most excellent kind. It is the life of life. *

But as our apostasy from God has fixed in us, by nature, a very contrary determination, to a course of sinful action, therefore, while that continues (which will be till some power subdues it), there can be no tendency in the soul to an holy temper. The power of the soul to any activity lies formally in the will. Hence its whole power, by nature, is to sin, and to reject God. For "the carnal mind is enmity against God." Rom. viii. 7. Consequently some other power must be exerted in order to break this evil determination, and reduce the rebellious creature to a

* There is some distinction between a natural and a moral principle of action; the former lies in the very essence of the being to which it belongs, or is a determination to some particular kind of action resulting from its frame or constitution. Thus, self-activity, or natural life, which is essential to the soul, is a principle of action in general. A determination to particular kinds of natural action, such as we call instinct in brutes, or reason in man, arises immediately from the existence of natural faculties, or something in the frame or constitution of creatures respectively. But a moral principle is a determination to some particular kind of action, arising from some settled judgment or sentiment, in which the will acquiesces. Thus a principle of holy action is the fixed impression of some spiritual truth or truths upon the heart.

right temper. And that must be a power that has dominion over the will. This new determination, therefore, is from the almighty agency of the Holy Spirit; it is he that communicates this new principle of life. Accordingly, it is everywhere ascribed to him in scripture. (John iii. 3—5, John vi. 63, Tit. iii. 5).

Observation 2. This principle of spiritual life and the manner of its communication are not immediately in themselves perceptible.

As Adam did not perceive when God breathed into his nostrils the breath of natural life, but perceived its existence and nature from its activity and effects, so the existence and nature of spiritual life are known only by the experience the Christian has of its exercise and efficacy. In this view our Lord observes, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." John iii. 8. There are, indeed, those who greatly abuse this passage, thence flattering themselves that they may be the subjects of regeneration, without perceiving any great change in their hearts and lives. But this is not only foreign to the sense of the place, but contradictory to it, for the wind is very sensibly perceived. The design of our Lord seems to be to remove the surprise of Nicodemus at the mysteriousness of the doctrine, by showing him it is a supernatural work performed by the Holy Spirit, as a gracious Sovereign, to which the sinner himself is so far from contributing anything, that he is not so much as sensible of the article of

communication, nor perceives the manner of the Holy Spirit's operation; q. d. there are mysteries in nature which you cannot account for. You cannot immediately perceive the origin of the wind, nor account for its ceasing when once in motion, or perceive the reason why it continually, and often very suddenly, changes its direction. You hear the sound and feel the effects, but it is only by observations on these sensations, either made by yourself, or suggested by others, that you can infer any conclusions about its nature or causes. Why then should you be surprised to find mysteries in the manner of divine operations, when performing works of grace? In this new birth, a man can only perceive the exercises of divine life in his heart, and by scriptural observations on these, infer what sort of life he lives, or form conclusions about its nature and principle. For any one, therefore, to pretend to tell what the principle of divine life is, antecedent to all exercises of life in the heart, and undertake from thence to demonstrate and explain those exercises, is a vain attempt. When he distinguishes this life from all its exercises, and goes about to tell us what it is antecedent to them all, he must talk in the dark about a certain something, of which he has no idea. To give it a name, to call it, for instance, a new temper or taste, is not to tell us what it is. Let any man explain what he means by a new or holy temper, without including some exercises of life in heart, if he can.

OBSERVATION 3. Regeneration and conversion, strictly taken, are not distinct things; but these different denominations express the same thing under different views. I

say conversion strictly taken; for largely taken, it includes the first exercises of the several graces of the Holy Spirit which are but the various modifications of the same principle of spiritual life, such as a justifying faith, hope, joy, zeal, sorrow for sin, &c. From which, regeneration (though the term is often also used in the same latitude, yet) is so distinct in a strict sense, as to be altogether antecedent, not only in the order of nature, but of time too. But strictly taken, conversion is the actual submission or turning of a soul to God in the most simple motion of it. This may be, perhaps, in the soul's submitting itself into the hands of divine sovereignty, as most fitly having a right to do with him as he pleases, or in a supreme regard to God as a most glorious Being and rightful Lord. Now this, when considered as the effect of the Holy Spirit's agency, enabling or causing the soul to turn to God, is called regeneration; but when considered as an activity essential to spiritual life, and formally as the soul's act, is called conversion; but these are only different views and respects of the same thing. For regeneration undoubtedly denotes a moral effect produced by the Spirit of God. But this effect which he produced, is the soul's turning to God. Surely, nothing short of this can be called the new birth. Regeneration is the implantation of holiness in the heart. Now, certainly, there can be no real holiness without turning to God; the soul that has not turned to God is still, without controversy, unregenerate. Hence it follows

Observtion 4. That this principle wrought in the soul in regeneration is not something antecedent to every act

and exercise of holiness, but includes in it, or is a first act or exercise of holiness, of the same nature with all the exercises of holiness that follow after through the course of life.

To cause life, is to cause action; for activity is essential to the idea of life. When the Holy Spirit regenerates a sinner, he communicates an active principle, otherwise it were not life. But to talk of an active principle existing in the soul absolutely without action, would be a contradiction; now this action must be cleaving to God. Hence arises,

OBSERVATION 5. Viz: that this principle of spiritual life consists in, or includes some new view of the mind, and determination or approbation of the will. This must be the case, because it is a moral principle; otherwise it would not be the principle of a course of moral action. When therefore a principle of spiritual life is implanted, a moral effect is produced; but that effect which includes no acts of the understanding and will, but is absolutely antecedent to them, must be a mere physical, and not a moral effect, and then to regenerate would be to create in a physical, not a moral sense.

I think the sacred scriptures set the matter in the same light with the above observations. Sometimes this happy change is expressed by the term "*light.*" "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye *light* in the Lord." Eph. v. 8. Sometimes it is represented under the notion of being made willing. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." Ps. cx. 3. Either of these ex-

pressions includes the other Thus when the regenerate are called *light*, the matter is not confined to the understanding only, but includes the approbation of the will, and to be willing, certainly includes the view of the understanding; for there can be no act of the will without it; sometimes both are set in view together, as: "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God." Acts xxvi. 18. Certainly to open the eyes and turn from darkness to light is to enlighten the understanding; and to turn to God is the act of the will. To the same purpose is, "For God hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Cor. iv. 6. To see the glory of God must include both the view of the understanding, and the approbation of the will. It is no objection to this, to say, these scriptures speak of this change largely taken. For admitting that, yet it is not by way of contradistinction from, or exclusive of, the first instance; but the first existence of life comes under the same predicament. Thus they, who were sometimes darkness, are not said to be enlightened only, but to be light. God, in the new creation, shines into the heart, in a manner analogous to his shining in the natural world, when he created light in it. It is very easy to say, that in regeneration, a holy temper is produced whence this knowledge and volition arises; but perhaps it would not be so easy to tell, in that connection, what we are to understand by that temper. Surely we are not to conceive of a moral, in the same manner as of a natural temper. In the latter,

we take into the consideration such a certain, yet various construction of the human frame, as is apt to produce such and such passions, and feelings of nature. Now if we have any idea of the former, any thing like this, we must then consider it only as a new faculty created in the soul, which has nothing moral in it, any more than the understanding or will considered as natural faculties. But if we conceive of it as a moral determination of the soul towards God, then we must consider it as including some apprehension of God in the understanding, and an act of the will embracing him, which brings the matter to what I have said. Thus, we are, as it were, insensibly led to some apprehension of what this divine principle is, or wherein it consists, though we cannot comprehend the manner of the Holy Spirit's operation in producing it, or explain how it exists. It is an experimental, practical knowledge of God, or it is a new view of the infinite perfections of God, with the approbation of them in the will as most excellent; or, which is indeed the same thing under its proper denomination, it is a supreme love to God. Supreme love to God is the very essence of true religion; hence it is called "the fulfilling of the law." Rom. xiii. 10. Our Lord mentions love to God and our neighbour, as the sum and substance of the whole law. Matt. xxii. 37—40. No action can be called true obedience, if it do not flow from love to God, and every exercise of true grace may be reduced to this as its principle.

OBSERVATION 6. The Holy Spirit makes use of the word of God as a means in the work of regeneration, which

he renders irresistibly efficacious for that purpose. I am far from thinking with the Arminians, that the only influence of the Holy Spirit in this matter lies in what they call moral suasion; that is, as I understand it, the Holy Spirit having set before us the arguments and motives of the gospel in the word, both by his providence and an influence upon the mind, excites its attention to these things, and assists the natural faculties in weighing those arguments and motives, and thus strives to persuade the sinner to a compliance with gospel overtures, but still leaves it with himself to yield to or reject those arguments by a sovereign act of his own will. According to this, it is only an objective light that is set before the mind, as contained in the word; a representation of objects, as yet at a distance, of which the mind has no knowledge, but by the report and description of the word; and, perhaps, the most, if not all the light, which is usually called common illumination, may be obtained this way.

Nor can I agree with some, even eminent Calvinistic divines, that there is only a gradual difference between common and saving illumination. I believe there is a specific difference; there is in regeneration a subjective light created in the soul, which, though it is the knowledge of a glorious object presented to the mind, yet may fitly be called subjective in respect of the manner of its communication, as contradistinguished from, though not opposed to, the mere objective light of the word before described. It is an immediate intuitive sense or knowledge of the moral perfections and character of God, not gained by way

of conclusion from premises, or by argumentation, but arising from the approach of God to the soul by the way of gracious presence. He thus takes possession of the heart, and fills it with a sense of himself by his presence in a peculiar manner. And this is a way of knowing, very different from that received merely by description and report of the word, and, therefore, a different kind of knowledge, viz: by way of spiritual sense and experience. Though we cannot perceive or experience the manner of the divine presence or access to the soul, yet the fact is abundantly witnessed by the experience of God's people. Notwithstanding they have an habitual spiritual knowledge of God and divine truth, yet, at one season, they are distressed with darkness, and cannot get any proper views of God; at another, they shall be full of light, and astonished with the view of divine glory: now, what is the reason of this last difference? Surely, not from any difference in the objective light of the word, or their capacity to meditate upon it. But the reason of it is, the absence of God in the one case, and his glorious presence in the other; therefore, their first such knowledge of God was from such an approach to the soul, or divine presence in it. And for the reality of the experience of God's people, I refer to the account the sacred scriptures give us sometimes of their bitter complaints of God's hiding himself, and panting for him as the hart for the water-brooks; at other times, at their rejoicing in his beauty and glory, with which they are, as it were, transported; and I think these words of Job, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear,

but now mine eye seeth thee," (Job xiii. 5,) fully justify this distinction of objective and subjective knowledge. For admit that the design of the word is to represent the very lively views he had of the divine excellency, so that, comparatively speaking, all his former, even experimental views were but like report; yet by a parity of reason, there is a vast difference between experience in the lowest degree and report; and he goes upon this principle, that report, or by the hearing of the ear, is a very languid and imperfect way of knowing, compared with sight and intimate acquaintance. These are very different kinds of knowledge; as different as the knowledge a man has of a country from an historical account and map of it, or the report of travellers, and that he has from travelling through, and seeing it himself. Thus then, by this presence of God in the soul, it has a knowledge of him, which it could not possibly have without it, by the most animated descriptions and representations of the word. It was thus, even innocent Adam knew the moral character and excellency of God, not only by objective evidence from without, but also by subjective evidence from his experience of the divine presence.

But all this does not exclude moral influence by way of argument, the argument contained in the word; but rather accounts for their irresistible efficacy. Though mere moral suasion will not do the business, yet it is not excluded; it is a moral effect that is to be produced; therefore, it is natural enough to expect that the power producing it should be exerted in a moral way; and, consequently, a moral mean with great propriety be admitted.

That this matter may be better apprehended, I beg leave to observe, that the blessed God must be exhibited to the mind as an object of contemplation, in order to any act of the will towards him. The will approves him as most fit and worthy to be chosen, which must be founded upon the contemplation of him in the mind. Length of time is not, indeed, necessary for this purpose. The operations of the mind are very quick. Were we to suppose an adult, who had no opportunity of the word, to be regenerated, no doubt a reflection upon his own intuitive perceptions would exhibit the blessed God to the mind, as an object of contemplation. For it is absurd to suppose a new heart to exist in an adult person without any ideas of God and divine things in the understanding; for that is to suppose a person regenerated, and yet altogether ignorant of God; to turn to God without any knowledge of him, which I think is a contradiction, and the same thing as to say a man is changed without any alteration. The thief on the cross seems to be an instance to the contrary; though he lived in the land of Judea, and had opportunity of the word of God, it is not probable a man of his abandoned character sought any considerable acquaintance with it; yet his speech to his fellow-criminal, and his address to Jesus Christ, showed very considerable discoveries of God, and the character of his Saviour.

But let it be considered, that with respect to sinners who live under the means of grace, and enjoy the word of God, though, by reason of their estrangement from God, they have no proper views of divine truths, yet their

understandings are possessed of some general speculative knowledge of them. Yea, convinced sinners have more; they have such an experimental knowledge of the law convincing them of sin, as is effectual to arouse them out of their fatal security, and confute their false notions, and awaken them to a very solemn attention to the word of God. Now in regeneration, the intuitive views impressed on the mind by the divine presence, are exactly the same with the descriptions and delineations of the divine character in the word. The mind therefore, instead of reflecting immediately upon its own perceptions, looks forward to the word. Now the man's eyes are opened, and he understands the scripture in a manner he never could before. There he sees this glorious object represented as in a glass; from thence the reflection is so strong and lively as irresistibly, though in a moral way, to determine the will; for surely it is very apprehensible that the views of the mind may be so experimental, strong and full of evidence, that it is impossible for a rational being to withold the approbation and consent of the will; and thus this divine temper is formed in the heart. In this point of light, I think the apostle sets the matter, "But we all with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Cor. iii. 18. Though these words comprehend the gradual perfecting the image of God, in the progress of the work of grace; yet, certainly, the first step of the process is in the same way with all the subsequent, in the whole series. Nor does

the use of the glass at all derogate from the efficacy of the Spirit, in causing and conducting this whole matter. And indeed there is as really an immediate agency of the Spirit upon the soul, in every progressive perfecting of the image of God, and every instance of the quickening grace in believers, (when yet the concurring instrumentality of the word, notwithstanding, is acknowledged,) as there is in the first begetting of the divine life.

Here I would take notice, how very different this view of divine illumination is from the wild conceits of enthusiasts. Their pretended extraordinary discoveries and inspirations consist in unaccountable impulses without the word, the warm flights of imagination, and agitation of their passions; in all this they either have no reference to the word of God, but rather set light by it in comparison of their own great light; or else in pretending to the word, put inconsistent, ridiculous constructions upon it. But these intuitive views of God, I mentioned as primarily arising from his presence in the soul, are but the impression of such truths as the word of God describes; they lead to the scriptures, and give a rational, consistent view of them; this light is tried and judged by the word of God. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isa. viii. 20.

I cannot but think the instrumentality of the word in regeneration, in the view I have given of it, is once and again asserted in the sacred scriptures; thus, "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the

word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." 1 Pet. i. 23. The word, here rendered "born again," is the same which is used John iii. 3, of which new birth the word is declared to be an instrument or mean. In the same view, the same apostle tells the Christians to whom he wrote, that "by great and precious promises, they were made partakers of the divine nature;" (2 Pet. i. 4;) and to be made partakers of the divine nature is to be regenerated. Another passage is, "Of his own will begat he us with (or by) the word of truth." James i. 18. The word here used cannot with any propriety, I think, be understood of any thing else than the first infusion or begetting of spiritual life. When this is said to be done with or by the word, it must intend that it is used as an instrument or mean: in this view this blessed change is expressed by "putting God's law in the inward parts, and writing it in the heart." Jer. xxxi. 33.

Doubtless the Holy Spirit could as easily accomplish this great work without using any means; yet, as it appears very plain he has chosen to do otherwise, we may not only suppose, but readily see, great propriety in his making use of the word in this matter. This change is to be tried and judged of by the word; therefore, must answer to the descriptions and characters there given, as the impression on the wax answers to the characters of the seal. The views of God in the mind must be such as exactly agree to the descriptions and representations of him in the word. It was, consequently, very fit that these characters of the word should be impressed upon the soul, as a medium of determining the will in regeneration.

When the Holy Spirit takes the sinner in hand, in order to bring him home to God, the first step he ordinarily takes is to convince him of sin, confute his false notions, and slay his legal hopes; in this he makes use of the law as a mean, as all acknowledge. Yet in order to this effectual access of the law to the conscience, there is as really an immediate exertion of power and influence upon the soul, as there is also in regeneration; and though this conviction does not make the sinner more worthy of the grace of God, yet the great design of it is to prepare the way for the opening of divine truths upon the mind, with the brighter evidence, in its passing this saving change; which reflects the image of this glory upon the beholding soul, and determines the will. (2 Cor. iii. 18, Ps. cx. 3.)

Observation 7. From this new view of the mind, and determination of the will, or supreme regard to God, result the various exercises of heart, which are called the graces of the Holy Spirit, and distinguished by particular names, as their proper principle.

From this view of the divine character in the enlightened mind, naturally arises a discovery of the necessity of Christ's satisfaction to divine justice, and the fitness and glory of that way of reconciliation with God; hence faith in Christ. The plan of mercy still more illustrates the glory of the divine character, for it shines in the face of Jesus Christ; by these views of faith, spiritual affections are excited, sorrow for, and hatred against sin raised; hence an habitual watchfulness against sin and opposition to it, and delight in the service of God; and all this infers

a great and permanent change in the whole course of life and action; but practical writers have abundantly explained and described these things, to whom I refer my readers, and shall insist no further upon them here.

I therefore conclude with this general remark, viz: that it is of vastly more importance and concernment of us, to inquire into the reality of a gracious change, as discovered by the alteration, and holy exercises which the regenerate experience, than spend our time and zeal in disputing about the principle of spiritual life, wherein it consists, or what it is, antecedent to all exercises thereof. While we are warmly interested in deciding the speculative dispute, we are apt to forget the practical consideration of the important subject, and the application of it to ourselves; and those who attend to us, are led to treat the matter in the same manner; by this means, the interests of vital piety languish. While we justly lament the low state of experimental religion, to devote ourselves to these speculative refinements will not be found the way to revive it. Experience will always show, that to keep up a practical view of divine truths, and the solemn application of them in serious, pungent addresses to the conscience, is the best calculated for that purpose. Besides, if we lay down, by way of hypothesis, a certain something, of which we can have no idea, (as of a principle of life, antecedent to all exercises of life, we cannot; nor can we infer any conclusions about its nature from any exercises of the heart, if it include neither idea nor volition, but is something absolutely antecedent to both,) then we shall be in danger

of a superstructure as unintelligible as the basis upon which we build. Thus some have wildly dreamed, that the principle of spiritual life may exist in the soul without any act or exercise of life, as a taste, which lies dormant until a proper object be applied to it; and if it may exist one moment, why not two? And if two, why not a minute? And so on, till they bring the supposition to hours, days, months, and years; and so a regenerate person may still continue an unbeliever, and of consequence, in an unjustified state. And I see not why it would not be as easy to continue the supposition till death, and to send him to hell, with his dormant principle along with him. Thus the cause of vital religion is greatly disserved.

But if we attend to the plain, practical views the scriptures give us of this matter, consider the exercises of divine life which discover the happy change produced in regeneration, and trace these to their first principle, which, from the nature of these exercises, we conclude to be something of the same nature with them—to be a first act of the series of acts or exercises that follow after, which the Holy Spirit causes the soul to exert, (*i. e.*, causes it to live,) we are in no danger of any fatal mistake. In this way, the heart will be more likely to feel itself interested; and thus people become more solemn and exercised in examining and judging the state of their own souls. And that this may be more extensively the case among professors, may God of his infinite mercy grant for Christ's sake! Amen.

AN ESSAY

ON THE MEANS OF GRACE.

BY THE REV. JOHN BLAIR.

I. The great God stands in no need of means in order to accomplish his purposes. He could, if he pleased, cause all events he sees meet to effect, to come to pass in the same way he caused the world at first to exist, viz: by the word of his power or sovereign act of his will; yet it does not at all derogate from his efficiency, but rather serves to illustrate his power, to use means, and appoint a connection between them and the end in view, both in the natural and moral world: yet such a connection as always depends upon the divine pleasure. Means are effectual or ineffectual, as he affords or withholds his concurrence—particularly, in the administration of his moral government, he deals with the subjects thereof in a way suited to their rational natures, and uses means of a moral nature in carrying on the interests of religion in our degenerate world. To this purpose, he has given his holy word, appointed a gospel ministry and ordinances of worship, such as the sacraments of the New Testament, praise and prayer.

II. These, divines commonly call means, not of instruction only, but of grace; the reason is, because it is in the use of these means, the Holy Spirit ordinarily communicates or bestows grace on sinners, and builds up his children in holiness, until he brings them safe home to glory. Now, whatever can be considered as a mean in reference to an end, must have some tendency to, and, in its own way, have influence upon, or concur in attaining it; for that which has no such tendency or influence, has no manner of connection with the existence or accomplishment of the end, and, consequently, is no means of it at all. If, therefore, these ordinances are means of grace, they must have a tendency to, and, in the hand of the Holy Spirit, concurrence in, the regeneration and conversion of sinners, and thence forward, in carrying on the work of grace in them. As all ordinances of worship are but various manners of administrating the word of God, it is especially to be considered as a mean for these purposes.

III. That we may see with what propriety these are called means of grace, let us attend to what we find ascribed to, or predicated of, the word in the Bible; which only can be said of it considered as an instrument or means, and not as an efficient cause, which it cannot be. The conviction of sinners is ascribed to it, "By the law is the knowledge of sin." Rom. iii. 20. Peter's hearers, upon hearing his discourse, wherein he proved from the scriptures of the Old Testament, that Jesus whom they had crucified was the true Messiah, "were pricked in their hearts." Acts ii. 37. By this, God distinguishes his word

delivered by the true prophets, from that delivered by the false, viz: this, that his "word is like a fire, and like a hammer, that breaketh the rock in pieces." Jer. xxiii. 29. "The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Heb. iv. 12. It kills the legal pride of sinners, "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." Gal. ii. 19. I have already taken notice in my observations on regeneration, that Christians are said to be "born again," "begotten," and "made partakers of the divine nature,"(1 Pet. i. 23, James i. 18, 2 Pet. i. 4,) by the word of God; to which I would add Ps. xix. 7, 8, where the word under the terms "Law," "Testimony," "Commandments," is said "to convert the soul," "make wise the simple," and "enlighten the eyes;" all which terms plainly express the saving change wrought in regeneration. This change is an inscription of the divine law upon the heart. Jer. xxxi. 33. All these expressions signify much more than merely instructing the speculative understanding. They must import the concurrence of the word as a mean or instrument in the hand of the Holy Spirit, both in the preparatory work of conviction, and also in effecting the saving change in regeneration. It is unnecessary to recite the many passages which represent the word and ordinances as means of quickening, supporting, comforting, sanctifying, perfecting and strengthening of God's people. I would only observe, that the efficacy

of the word for these purposes, depends upon the presence and immediate agency of the Holy Spirit in the heart; which as really takes place in these instances, as in the regeneration of a sinner, and the latter as easily admits the use of means as the former.

IV. The efficacy of the means of grace lies not in any intrinsic virtue in themselves, nor depends upon the power or will of those who attend upon them; for the effect to be produced is supernatural, to which sinners are by nature entirely averse, and destitute of a true discernment of the excellency of the truths and weight of the arguments proposed in the word; but they are rendered effectual to the attainment of the end by the blessing of the Holy Spirit upon them, and his energy in them; they are means in the Spirit's hand, rather than the creature's. And sinners are to attend upon them in that view, that they may be in the way in which the Spirit meets with such and works upon them, like the poor impotent people who lay at the pool, waiting for the descent of the angel to trouble the waters. John iii. 4. With respect to creature agents, the application or use of means depends upon them; but the causality itself, or energy of means in order to the end, is not in their power, nor depends upon their will. Hence, they often fail of success in the use of the best adapted means; but when this divine agent condescends to use means, he causes their efficacy, and makes them effectual when, and with respect to whom, he pleases. I say, condescends to use means; for the very circumstance I have mentioned shows he needs them not; he could do

immediately whatsoever he pleases; when, therefore, he is pleased to make use of means, it is in order to the more easy discovery of himself to his creatures. Hence it follows, that the great God is not the less an efficient for his using means, nor the less displays his power in accomplishing the end by them.

V. Yet, notwithstanding, there is an aptness and tendency in the means in order to the end in view, otherwise they would not be properly means. Those things which have no aptness or tendency to the attainment of the end can have no sort of influence upon it; the existence of the end has no kind of connection with them, and, consequently, they are no means at all of its existence. Now, the aptness or tendency of the word of God to reduce sinners to the obedience of Christ lies in, 1st. The clearness of representation, whereby divine truths are set before the mind. Divine truths are clothed in the most plain and intelligible language their sublime nature will allow of; they are descriptively expressed, so as not only to declare their nature, but also to describe their true influence, and the impressions they should make upon the heart. They are also illustrated by the most familiar similitudes. 2d. In the interesting manner in which these sacred truths are urged, or the weight of the arguments with which they are pressed home. 3d. In the awful authority and great majesty with which they are delivered, whence they bind and affect the conscience; they are set before us with a "thus saith the Lord or Jehovah," our rightful Sovereign, with whom is terrible majesty, "and your God," who has

a covenant claim upon his professing people. Hence, then, when the Holy Spirit takes the word in his hand, and makes application of it to the heart, it is most apt and fit as a mean to instruct the mind and inform the conscience, and thus to convince and awaken the sinner; to lay restraints upon men, and repress, or in some measure restrain, even the natural enmity of the awakened sinner: and when the Holy Spirit effectually opens the sinner's eyes, and makes him understand divine truths as they are represented in the word, they have a most apt tendency, by way of argument, to persuade and determine the will, and to promote the life and exercise of all the graces of the Holy Spirit in true Christians.*

I have said that when the word is so effectually applied to the conscience as to convince the sinner, it is a means of repressing or restraining his natural enmity. As this will probably in a particular manner be called in question, I beg leave to offer a few thoughts further upon it. I do not at all suppose the sinner's enmity is in this case subdued; for then he would be regenerated, which is contrary to the supposition. The wickedness of men may be, yea, in many instances is, restrained, when its governing power is not all broken. Hence, those who were clean escaped from them who live in error, and escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, may be allured through the lusts of the flesh,

* I would here refer the reader to what I have said in the sixth Observation on Regeneration, concerning the instrumentality of the word therein.

and much wantonness, and be again entangled; yea, it too often proves to be the case, that, "according to the true proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that is washed, to her wallowing in the mire." 2 Pet. ii. 18—22. The acting of the sinner's enmity is, indeed, more direct against God and spiritual objects, thus brought near and set in view before him by conviction, and this, no doubt, is a great aggravation of those exercises of enmity; yet it will by no means follow that enmity, as an evil principle in the heart, is more prevalent, or has, in this case, acquired a greater degree of power. The power of this, as well as every other evil habit, lies in the sway and dominion it has in the heart. Enmity reigns in the heart ever while it is destitute of true love to God; but yet the more peaceably it possesses the heart, and the more fully it has its consent, the more powerful it is. While the sinner is in a state of security, though he does not feel so explicit opposition to God in his heart, as being more out of view; yet it is the same principle of enmity that carries him on in casting God's law behind his back, in neglecting the divine service, and giving a loose rein to his corruptions, while he despises, and perhaps derides, strict religion. His enmity lords it over him without control, and hardens his heart against reproof and conviction. It is unmolested in its sway, and carries the sinner headlong whichever way it directs; and he justifies himself in all this, and refuses to take blame to himself; but the awakened sinner, while conviction is borne home upon the conscience, confesses the just authority over him, that

he has most unjustly trampled upon it, and violated his law. Though he has no holy acquiescence in, or choice of, the divine government, yet he has a rational conviction that it is rightful, and that he deserves punishment for contradicting it; that he feels his heart averse, greatly alarms him, and convinces him of the existence of enmity in his heart. Instead of spurning at his convictions, trampling them under foot, and casting them off, which would be the case if enmity acquired strength in proportion to his convictions, he cherishes them, and is afraid of falling back into security again. Though he feels risings of heart, yea, some sinners make some attempts to shake off their convictions, with whom they are too powerful, and are increased till they break their stout spirits, as they give up their struggles to stifle them, and become afraid lest they should leave them again to fall into a hardened state; yet this is so far from proving the increase of enmity as to strength or prevalence, that, in reality, it proves the restraint of it by the authority of God's law in the conscience, and convincing influences of the Holy Spirit. Upon a discovery of the exceeding depravity and wickedness of his heart, the sinner, upon some principle, wishes his heart was changed. True, he does not choose holiness or turning to God in itself considered, for that he does not, is one main thing that fills his conscience with so much guilt; yet he earnestly desires there was such a heart in him, as did see the beauty of holiness, and truly choose it. He desires this, indeed, upon no higher principle, than a regard to his own happiness. This, where there is no

higher, is not a holy principle, nor is this sort of desire of grace such as denotes true grace in the heart; yet it is not, in itself, a wicked principle. That this respect to his own happiness does not regard holiness as an ingredient in it, and is not subordinate to, and under the influence of, a higher and more noble principle, is his crime; but that it is in him, and has influence upon him, is not. Surely, the sinner's enmity is not as prevalent and unrestrained, when he is thus anxiously solicitous to obtain heart-changing grace, even on this principle, as when he utterly disregarded the matter, and justified himself in refusing to return.

When it is said, that the awakened sinner still continues to reject Christ, and hate God with all his heart, the meaning must either be, that, under all his convictions, the sinner exerts himself to the utmost with all his might in opposition to them; that he the more pours contempt on the gospel, and stoutly resolves to reject Jesus Christ, that he casts about to find out how he may bear himself up in a determined opposition to the gospel overtures of salvation, and the more he is convinced, the more maliciously does he oppose, and impudently justify himself in refusing, Christ and his redemption, like the Scribes and Pharisees of old, which would argue the increase of enmity with a witness; and then, the proposition is not true, yea, notoriously contrary to fact. Or else the meaning must only be, that notwithstanding all his convictions, and increase of light, his enmity is not at all subdued, but if present restraints were removed, it would return to its old

stubborn stoutness in the way of sin; and all the faculties and powers of the soul are still under the reigning power of that hateful principle; and then I have no controversy with any man about it. But this is no way inconsistent with what I have said, unless we say, that to lay restraint upon the lusts and corruptions of men, is inconsistent with their dominion in the heart; or else, that they have as great a degree of power under restraints, as when most unrestrained; neither of which will any man in the due use of his reason assert, for that would destroy all ideas of different degrees of wickedness. The sinner's convictions awaken his attention to those glorious objects, God, and his Son Jesus Christ, and the way of salvation through him; and thereby the actings of his natural enmity are more direct and explicit, which doubtless more aggravates them as particular acts, and exposes the malignity of that hateful principle. Yet that very discovery, and the sinner's condemning himself for it, and cries to God for deliverance from it, show that it has not as quiet possession of the heart, and as prevalent energy in it as formerly. Now it is from the principles, good or bad, which have the governing prevalence in the heart, that persons have their character, especially in the eye of the heart-searching God; if, then, under solemn convictions by the authority of God's law, and the convincing influences of the Holy Spirit, the sinner's natural enmity be restrained, it will follow, that the awakened sinner's character is not, on the whole, rendered more vile and odious in the sight of God, than it was in the days of his security and con-

tented course of sin against him. * Can it be imagined, that the sinner's enmity has as strong an energy in him, when brought to break off from his course of external sins, as when he pursued them with greediness? When he earnestly attends to the duties of religion, as when he neglected them with scorn and contempt, or trifled with them in a listless formality? And when he eagerly seeks the company of God's people, asking their advice, as when he hated to be near them, could not bear their conversation, but took delight in the company of the profane and ungodly? But to return.

That the means of grace have a tendency to the conviction and conversion of sinners, as well as the edification of God's people, appears by the expostulations God uses with them in his word, as utterly inexcusable and perverse in continuing impenitents after all the pains he has taken upon them, and means used with them. In the fifth chapter of Isaiah from the beginning, the Lord represents the abundant provision he had made for their fruitfulness, in point of means and advantages which he had afforded

* It will by no means follow, that awakened sinners are, in a degree, accepted of God, on account of their being less sinful than they were in the days of their security; for the divine law still condemns them as falling short, infinitely short of its demands; and their less sinfulness makes no atonement for the smallest past transgression. It only follows that, in their present case, they merit a less degree of disapprobation and punishment; *i. e.*, they are less offensive; and this we must admit, or else deny different degrees of wickedness; or assert that the lowest degree of wickedness is as offensive, and disapproved in as high a degree, as the greatest.

them. "What could have been done to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" Isa. v. 4. "But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you; but they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and imaginations of their evil heart, and went backward and not forward. Since the day that your fathers came forth of the land of Egypt unto this day, I have even sent you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them. Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck; they did worse than their fathers. Therefore, thou shalt speak all these words unto them, but they will not hearken unto thee; thou shalt also call unto them, but they will not answer thee; but thou shalt say unto them, This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the Lord their God, nor receiveth correction. Truth is perished and cut off from their mouth. Cut off thine hair, O Jerusalem, and cast it away, and take up a lamentation on high places, for the Lord hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath." Jer. vii. 23—29. Here we see their disobedience to, and abuse of, the means he had used with them, was the reason why they were so peculiarly the people of God's wrath, and of the sad issue of their case. If it be said, the instruction they got from the word is sufficient to render impenitent sinners inexcusable, I answer, either this light and instruc-

tion has a tendency to their conversion, (and if this be admitted, the matter is fairly given up,) or it has no such tendency at all; and then how does it at all render them inexcusable in continuing impenitent and unconverted?

The conversion of sinners to God is the great scope of the means of grace; this the word of God calls for at their hands, commands and presses it with the greatest importunity. It is needless to recite authorities for this to such as are acquainted with their Bible, since we might quote a greater part of that sacred book to this purpose. Therefore it is, that the gospel ministry is called the ministry of reconciliation, and it is the business of gospel ministers to pray sinners in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God. Yet

VI. There is no certain or infallible connection between the most diligent and earnest attendance on the means of grace that unregenerate sinners are capable of, and their obtaining the saving grace of God. This issue of the matter is entirely from the sovereign mercy of God. If we suppose a certain necessary connection in this case, it must arise either from the nature of the thing, viz: some constitution or law of nature, or from some promise and positive appointment of God to that purpose; but in the case before us, there is no such connection in either way. Not the former; for the means of grace are positive institutions, and don't fall under the laws of nature; nor do they operate by way of influence upon God to move him to show mercy, but are means whereby the blessed God deals with sinners, and works effectually on whom he

pleases; their efficacy depends upon his blessing and energy. In this view he has appointed means, and requires fallen man to attend upon them. Guilty sinners lie at mercy upon which they have no claim, but it lies in the breast of God as a Sovereign, of his own grace, to show mercy or not as he pleases; and, therefore, according to his sovereign pleasure, he renders the means of grace effectual or not; and as to the latter part of connection, viz: by promise or positive appointment, there is not the smallest evidence of it in the word of God; if there be, let any one show it who thinks he can. I must confess I have not met with one such promise in all the book of God. As to such passages as Luke xi. 9 and Matt. vii. 7, "Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you," there the conduct of God as Father towards his children is plainly spoken of; and, therefore, asking, seeking, and knocking in faith, asking, &c., in a gracious manner is intended; and they are the children of God who are spoken of. So the moral efficacy of the means of grace terminated on God to move him to give grace, (the very mention of which shows the absurdity of the supposition,) or the sinner's use of them were at all the ground or reason of his showing mercy; then, indeed, the very appointment of means would imply a promise of success, or something equal to it, in the required use of them; but this is so far from being the case, that, on the contrary, the tendency of the means to the end lies in their moral influence upon the consciences and hearts of sinners. Yet whatever aptness to such an influ-

ence there is in the means of grace, such is the blindness, deadness, enmity and prejudice of poor sinners, that until the Holy Spirit accompany them with his presence and energy, no such influence will effectually take place in their hearts. Now, he works in or by these means as a Sovereign; hence, he strives with many only in such a way as that he suffers them still to resist, until in just resentment he forsakes them. But with respect to the vessels of mercy, he prosecutes his gracious design, until by the "rod of his strength" (the word of his grace), he irresistibly conquers, "and rules in the midst of his enemies." Psa. cx. 2.

Therefore sinners are to use the means of grace as creatures lying at mercy, seeking pure grace, which depends on the mighty energy of the Holy Spirit; but they can found no claim to grace on their most diligent use of said means. It is enough to engage sinners to the use of means, that God has appointed them as such, has required their attendance upon them; there is an aptness in the means themselves and a proper tendency, and it is by these means the Holy Spirit works; in this way he meets with perishing creatures in mercy, and they cannot expect the grace of God in the neglect of his institutions. While there is a "*may be* the Lord will be gracious," (Amos v. 15,) or, "*who knoweth* if the Lord will return, and repent, and leave a blessing behind him?" (Joel ii. 14,) sinners will be utterly inexcusable in neglecting them, and justly charged with choosing their own destruction.

VII. From what has been said it will follow, as a con-

clusion on the whole, that all sinners, when the gospel comes, are under the most indispensable obligations to attend the means of grace. The design of their institution, as mediums of the Spirit's dealing with their souls about their eternal interests, lays them under bonds of gratitude. For why, shall the offended majesty of heaven thus seek after rebellious sinners? Would it not then be the basest ingratitude to treat him with neglect? The gracious authority of God binds their consciences; he requires their attendance upon his ordinances; their very institution implies such a requisition, and it will be a disobedience, highly criminal, to neglect them.

We also hence see what grounds of encouragement sinners have, for their attendance on the means of grace; they have not the assurance of a promise that they shall be successful; the great God has come under no such engagement; they have no ground of present peace and security from their most diligent and earnest use of them. Such apprehensions would lead to, and support, a self-righteous spirit, and be an abuse of the means of grace. They have great reason of deepest anxiety lest they fail of the grace of God, and provoke the Holy Spirit to forsake them. Yet they have sufficient motives from the aforesaid design of their institution; their moral aptness and tendency, whereby they are adapted to our rational natures and the Spirit's operations, and suited to affect the hearts of men in a moral way. It is the stated way of the Spirit's dealing with the souls of men; by his word and ordinances he strives with sinners, and by the same means

he accomplishes his special work of grace; and in this way there is the only probability of meeting with mercy. In the continued neglect of God's ordinances there is certain destruction, but in waiting on God in this way there is a peradventure the Lord may have mercy. The Holy Spirit has rendered the means of grace effectual to multitudes, and how knows each sinner but, of his rich grace, he may effectually reach him?

Hence, also, we may see that ministers of the gospel not only may, with safety and propriety, but are bound, in duty, to urge unregenerate sinners, as well as others, to a diligent use and improvement of the means of grace, and in that way to seek unto God for regenerating grace. If the preceding view of the matter be kept up, such exhortations can have no tendency to settle people in a legal dependence on the means, nor promote security nor carnal confidence. Yea, it is highly incumbent on the ministers of Christ to give particular directions to poor sinners in order to their improvement of the means, in such a manner as has the most likely tendency, and wherewith it is most probable the Holy Spirit may concur for their conversion to God. Certainly, a mere external attendance upon the administration of ordinances, while the heart is secure and careless, is not likely to answer any good end. Undoubtedly, such have need to be directed so to attend to the word of God as to compare themselves therewith, to examine themselves, and enter into a serious consideration of their own state and character, and lay to heart the danger they are in. Awakened sinners are inclined to seek shelter in the

duties of religion, and to expect healing and relief to their consciences from their earnest use of means. These need to be warned of that dangerous rock, and be directed to such a view of God's law as may more deeply convince them of their utter depravity, and slay them dead to the law. Gal. ii. 19. Their attention to the overtures of the gospel should be urged. Our safe path lies between two dangerous extremes, viz: of those who only try to convince men of their unregenerate state, call upon them to embrace Jesus Christ, and then leave them under all their perplexing exercises and distresses, without any counsel or direction; and thus their various temptations, discouragements, and despondencies are overlooked, and no assistance is administered when they most need it. It is a matter of great consequence into what hands poor, convinced sinners fall; an unskilful treatment of them is vastly injurious. The other extreme is of those who direct sinners to duties and attendance on the means of grace in such a legal manner as to encourage their dependence upon them; such lead poor creatures to think they can do something to recommend themselves to God; their utter insufficiency in themselves is never fairly opened up. On the contrary, they are told if they will do their part, God will do his; and thus they are made to believe there is a certain connection between their own best endeavours and the saving grace of God; that if they *do what they can*, God will do the rest. Thus the nature and design of the means is misrepresented. They are considered as means which sinners use with God in order to prevail with him, rather than

means whereby he deals with them, in order to call them back again to himself, and renders them irresistibly efficacious for that purpose when he pleases. The first of these extremes tends to make sinners neglect all attempts to perform the duties of religion, or if they give their presence at ordinances, yet make no essay to strive with their own hearts, as being altogether in vain, without any tendency to promote their good, and not required of them in their present circumstances. While this doctrine is believed, Satan is not much afraid of damage to his interest from all their convictions of being in an unregenerate state; for the consequence is, they quench the Spirit. If convictions startle them, they, upon this principle, make no attempt to cherish their convictions, easily fall asleep again, and lie still in careless indolence. By the latter extreme, the striving of sinners is turned into a wrong channel, and they are directed to the use of means upon principles entirely wrong. The directions they get, send them to the law for life, and settle them upon a righteousness of their own. Both the extremes are injurious to the interests of religion, and destructive to the souls of men. Both are to be avoided; the ministers of the gospel are to endeavour the conviction and awakening of sinners, and when there are any awakenings they are to attend and cherish them, and by prudent, seasonable and evangelical counsel to direct their way, and point out the method of salvation to them. They have sufficient encouragement to such a conduct upon this principle, that however dead, miserable and helpless sinners are, yet it

is by such views and impressions as evangelical counsels and directions tend to, that the Holy Spirit carries on his work in the souls of men; and therefore, when he concurs, they shall be rendered effectual. May the God of all grace teach his servants how to negotiate the treaty of peace and reconciliation, and make them abundantly wise to win souls to Jesus Christ! Amen.

WILLIAM TENNENT, Jr.

The Rev. William Tennent, Jr., was the second son of William Tennent, Sen., and was born on the 5th day of Jan., 1705, in the County of Armagh, in Ireland, and was just turned of thirteen years when he came to this country. Being a youth of zeal and industry, he made great proficiency in the languages, particularly in the Latin. Being early impressed with a deep sense of divine things, he soon determined to follow the example of his father and elder brother, by devoting himself to the service of God in the ministry of the gospel. Having completed his classical course, he commenced the study of theology with his brother Gilbert, in New Brunswick, and after going through a regular course, was preparing for his examination by the Presbytery as a candidate for the gospel ministry. By intense application, his health was affected and he appeared to be going into a decline. It was at this point in his history, that he fell into that remarkable death-like trance, which is fully recorded in his life in the "Log College." On recovery from this trance, he was found to be totally ignorant of every transaction of his life previous to his sickness. He could not read a single word, neither did he seem to have any idea of what it meant. As soon as he became capable of attention, he was taught to read and write, as children are usually taught; and afterwards began to learn the Latin language under the tuition of his brother. One day, as he was reciting a lesson, he suddenly started, clapped his hand to his head, as if something had hurt him, and made a pause. His brother asked him what was the matter; he said that he felt a sudden shock in his head,

and it now seemed to him as if he had read that book before. By degrees his recollection was restored, and he could speak the Latin as fluently as before his sickness. His memory so completely revived, that he gained a perfect knowledge of the past transactions of his life, as if no difficulty had previously occurred. As soon as circumstances would permit, Mr. Tennent was licensed and began to preach the everlasting gospel with great zeal and success. In Oct., 1733, Mr. Tennent was regularly ordained the pastor of the Freehold Church, as successor to his brother John, where he continued through the whole of a pretty long life, one of the best proofs of ministerial fidelity.

Mr. Tennent was rather more than six feet high, of a spare, thin visage, and of an erect carriage. He had bright, piercing eyes, a long sharp nose, and a long face. His general countenance was grave and solemn, but at all times cheerful and pleasant with his friends. It may be said of him, with peculiar propriety, that he appeared, in an extraordinary manner, to live above the world and all its allurements. He seemed habitually to have such clear views of spiritual and heavenly things, as afforded him much of the foretaste and enjoyment of them. His faith was, really and experimentally, "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things unseen." Literally his daily walk was with God, and he lived "as seeing him who is invisible." The divine presence with him was frequently manifested in his public ministrations and in his private conduct.

About the latter end of Feb., 1777, Mr. Tennent was suddenly seized with a fever, attended by violent symptoms. During his whole sickness he continued perfectly resigned to the divine will, until death was swallowed up in victory, on the 8th of March, 1777. He was buried in his own church at Freehold.

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY,

NO OBJECTION TO THE SINNER'S STRIVING.

A SERMON BY THE REV. WILLIAM TENNENT, JR., PREACHED TO THE MEMBERS OF THE ENGLISH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NEW YORK, JAN. 20, 1765.

"Strive to enter in at the strait gate."—LUKE xiii. 24.

SUCH doctrines as Christ taught, his disciples need not fear to teach; such admonitions as the infallible Saviour of the world hath given, we are warranted to give, and need not fear their consequence. When, therefore, we behold sinners, in gay and numerous multitudes, gliding carelessly down the broad way that leadeth to destruction, while a solitary few struggle in the narrow path of virtue, what though some arise and cavil? What though some endeavour to bewilder the pious mind with difficulties? We may safely warn them, as did our Divine Master; we need not fear his displeasure, as some pretend, if we persuade them to stop their career, to strive and struggle, that they may enter the strait gate. But that you may ascertain the meaning of our great Lord in the text, I beg leave to direct your attention to two things.

1. By the strait gate is undoubtedly intended, the terms of Christianity, or the conditions upon which our salvation is suspended.

To be assured of this, we need only reflect upon the figure made use of in the text; this is more largely and particularly inserted in Matt. vii. 13. Both of the evangelists, without doubt, refer to the same expression of our Saviour; both give the same idea, but one more fully than the other, as in many other instances besides the present; by consulting both, we shall therefore get the true and full idea which Christ designed to convey. Matthew only says, "enter the strait gate." Luke says, "strive to enter." Matthew gives the meaning, but Luke more fully; that Luke gives the very words of our Lord, in this part of the sentence, we may reasonably suppose. For first, if he does not, he certainly conveys an idea more than was ever intended by Christ. A struggle towards entering is certainly more than simply entering. It appears, in the second place, perfectly agreeable to the latter part of the figure, where the narrowness of the gate implies the necessity of striving to enter it. Matthew mentions one reason for the direction, viz: "for strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth to life;" with this addition by way of alarm, "and few there be who find it." Luke does not mention this, but another as alarming; "that many shall seek to enter and shall not be able." By taking both together, you find our Lord's direction at large, which is this: "Strive—struggle—be in great earnest to enter the strait gate; for wide is the

gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many go in thereat; but strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth to life, and few there are who find it; and let this your strife be without delay; for many, when it is too late, shall seek to enter in and shall not be able.

Whence, it is easy to perceive, that man, since the fall, is represented as by nature travelling in pursuit of happiness, but in a mistaken path; travelling in a way which, though broad, descending and easy, yet leads unerring to the abode of death. Our Divine Master represents himself as one, who, filled with compassion, at the sight of this numerous throng, gaily moving on to ruin, hath in his gospel opened a narrow gate for their reception, which, with most disinterested pity, he persuades them to strive to enter. The way you are in, says he, is confessedly broad, and you are kept in countenance by the multitude; but, I warn you, eternal death hath his dwelling *there*. This way is narrow and difficult; but life and happiness dwell *here*. Strive and struggle then to enter.

By the strait gate, is therefore intended the terms of Christianity, or the conditions of the gospel. And what are these, but repentance and faith? By the narrow way, the continuance in these terms, or the progress of the Christian. These are termed strait and narrow, because of the natural corruption and evil propensities of the soul, which make the duties of Christianity difficult and mortifying. To enter the strait gate, then, means neither more nor less, than to begin to be a Christian: to submit to the

terms of the gospel, or to enter a state of grace. Remark this, my brethren, for it will be the foundation of our discourse.

2. But to whom is this direction given? A second particular, which you will please to attend to. Is it to the saints? To those who are already in a state of favour with God, and are already treading the rugged paths of virtue? No, it would be an absurdity, that those who have already entered, should be persuaded to enter. They are not desired to continue, but to begin; it is to sinners that the words are addressed; it is to those who are in the broad way of sin, which corrupt nature makes easy, and throngs with a multitude.

And what direction doth he give them? What advice flows from his divine, infallible lips? What direction, of consequence, is fit and proper to be given to all such poor wanderers by nature? What direction are his ministers herefrom warranted to give to the numbers whom they behold treading the same downward road? Why, "Strive to enter the strait gate." Let me remark, my brethren, there is more emphasis in the original word, translated "strive," than can be crowded into one English term: *agonizesthe*, let your strife be most intense and earnest; not only strive but struggle, as one who would force through a narrow pass. It signifies a struggling with a mere agony; I would render it *agonize*, and bow every power of the soul in the earnest attempt as one who would save an immortal soul

What difference—what immense difference is there

between this advice, and the opinion of certain modern reformers of doctrine, who insist that sinners ought not to be put upon striving for the salvation of their souls; that they ought not to be directed to seek for faith, or an entrance into this strait gate, into these mortifying conditions of the gospel; and who brand all attempts to enter upon the narrow way of Jesus, with the foulest names!

Our Lord commands, and, therefore, there must be certain strivings, not only lawful, but the absolute duty of the unconverted, that they may enter the strait gate.

But because this notion is supposed by some to be inconsistent with God's sovereign disposal of grace, let me take up a little of your time,

I. In reconciling the notion of the sinner's striving, with that of the unmoved bestowment of grace. And in the

II place, Let me answer the objections offered to the doctrine.

I. In order to the first, let me lay down a few plain propositions or considerations, which being attended to, the difficulties vanish, and the truths appear reconciled of themselves.

1. God, in the bestowment of his grace or sanctifying the soul, treats man not as he would a stone, in the new modelling its form, but as a reasonable being; by his divine power making use of motives and means in changing his disposition.

Such rational means and motives as are in themselves fitted to influence the mind, infinite power makes use of as the instruments in converting the mind. To what other

end are all the rational and persuasive calls to sinners in the gospel, if they are not to be the means in the hand of God for their conversion? To what end are such glorious prospects set before them to awaken their hopes? Why such awful terror to alarm their fears—such powerful motives to their gratitude—such afflictive providences—such instances of mercy and goodness which (the apostle expressly asserts) lead to repentance? Are these only sent to vex and disquiet them, without any tendency to bring them to God? Why do we preach and you hear? Why do we persuade and you listen? Is the whole intent, the only design of this, to condemn and make miserable? God forbid that we should harbour such a thought! To suppose that God would lay and execute such a plan, the whole design of which is to condemn and render more wretched, is a thought highly injurious to the great fountain of happiness.

Now, although we can conceive of God's implanting a principle of holiness into the soul by his immediate power, without the interposition of any instruments, yet we have no reason to think that this is his ordinary method. Though by a single fiat the whole creation might have come into its present existence and order, yet he chose to do it in days, and by distinct commands; he saw fit that his Spirit, or his winds, should move on the face of the water, although he might have caused the whole human race to *be* in a moment, by a single command; yet he sees proper to make use of instruments in its production. As in the world of nature, so in the world of grace, he uses his word and ordi-

nances; they are the instruments in the hands of infinite power to produce the change; but they are only instruments which, without that power, would never effect it, more than the naked, inactive tools would frame a house, without the workman's strength and wisdom. Hence, God is said to "beget us by his word."

But here it is replied, What is this to our striving? Is there no distinction between the means which God uses with us, and those which we use with ourselves?

2. We answer by our second proposition, which is, that as our souls are rational, and to be changed by the interposition of certain motives and arguments in the hand, and set home by the power, of God; so it is necessary, that we, somehow or other, attend to these motives and arguments. If this is not the case, the pagans in Africa are in as fair a way to be converted by the gospel, as we who have it in our hands. If there is not a necessity that we diligently attend to it, there can be no benefit in having it. If we never hear, if we never attend to these motives and arguments, how can they be the instruments of our conversion? If we never hear, if we never read, if we never meditate on the word of God at all, how can that word be the means of begetting us again? In this sense, undoubtedly, faith is said to come by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Now says the apostle, "How shall they hear unless there is a preacher, and how shall he preach, unless he be sent?" Upon the apostle's plan, there must be a preacher —he must preach—we must hear, attend and consider, or else we cannot have faith. Here you see, we must be

active in the matter. Now, as this is the ordinary way in which it hath pleased God to communicate faith, is not he very absurd, who dreams of getting faith, without such attendance and reflection, and all those other things which are consequent upon, and necessarily connected with it? And is not this reason enough for us to persuade mankind to go and hear the word preached, to attend with all their might, to strive by reflection to see and feel its force, and so on as to other duties? This kind of striving, you see, is absolutely necessary to faith and holiness, in the ordinary course of God's dealing with sinners. And we can see no reason, why this notion should be objected to, because there seems to be something done in the matter, which God hath not immediately done: for if it may be his sovereign pleasure, to make use of the instrumentality of others towards my conversion, I see not why he may not also make use of the instrumentality of my own thoughts and reflections, to bring about that desirable end. And if we may call the dealings of God with us, by the instrumentality of others, *the means of grace*, I can see no reason, why we may not also term his dealing with us, by our own instrumentality, the means of grace likewise.

Now, my brethren, though some loudly exclaim against our calling these means, the way in which God usually confers his grace, because Christ hath, by way of eminence, stiled himself *the way*, that is, the foundation or procuring cause of salvation; yet there is an evident distinction between the way, or manner in which, and the procuring cause of which; and inasmuch as we always use it in the

former sense, when we speak on this subject, I can see no reason to change the term, a term so expressive, until our great reformer of Christianity shall furnish us with a better.

To conclude this section, although the salvation of a sinner, from first to last, may, in a sound and theological sense, be termed a miracle, and is begun and accomplished "according to the working of God's mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead;" (Eph. i. 19;) yet, as it has pleased God to subject his works in nature to the instrumentality of second causes, and the ways of his providence and grace, in their ordinary dispensation, to the rational use of means, we are not to expect our salvation, or even the common blessings of this life, without using the means appointed to obtain them. There is a wide difference between what God can do, and sometimes does in an extraordinary way, and what we, as reasonable creatures, ought to do. And we leave it to our hearers to judge, whether, according to the instituted method of divine grace, revealed in the holy scriptures, and confirmed by the experience of the saints, it is not as reasonable to hope, that God will overset nature, and extinguish the sun by a miracle, for our salvation, as to expect it without striving; and in all seasons, whether ordinary or extraordinary, which have happened in the Church of God, the first evidence we have of a sinner's return is, after diligent use of appointed means, and previous earnest striving. St. Paul's conversion was very sudden, and as miraculous as any we read of; yet the first

notice we have of it, is, "behold he prayeth." Acts ix. 11. The conversion of the three thousand, on the day of Pentecost, was in the way of an anxious concern for salvation; and we read, that from the days of John the Baptist, the kingdom of heaven suffered violence, and the violent took it by force. Matt. xi. 12. And we have no reason to suppose, that salvation can be obtained upon easier terms at this day.

OBJECTION. But if his striving is so necessary, may he not make a merit of it, and thus the bestowment of grace not appear wholly free? See here the principal objection to this scheme, which gives occasion to our third proposition.

3. There is a wide difference between the way or manner in which God chooses to bestow his grace, and the procuring, meritorious cause for which. You may exemplify this in the case even of the saints. How are saints appointed to get more grace? Are they to be idle, and carelessly wait to see whether a sovereign God will bestow it? No; they are to cry for it, and act like babes; according to Paul, they are eagerly to "desire the sincere milk of the word that they may grow thereby." Now, their eager desires, their praying and crying, were it prolonged to eternity, cannot be esteemed an equivalent for one smile of their God. Their desires and prayers are not the procuring cause, or the merit for which God bestows more grace: they do not move him to do it by way of desert; and yet he hath appointed this as the way in which, for CHRIST'S sake, they may expect it. These ordi-

nances are the means he makes use of in conveying it; Christ, and Christ alone, is the meritorious and procuring cause. Thus you see, there is an undeniable distinction between the way in which God, as a Sovereign, chooses to confer, and the procuring cause for which. And if the saint who obtains fresh supplies of grace in this way, hath no cause, and will never find cause to boast of his having deserved, or moved God to it by his prayers, much less will the poor sinner, whose attendance upon the means of grace is so much more imperfect. "Boasting is therefore wholly excluded."

If we consider matters strictly, we shall find that our diligence to eternity is not a sufficient payment for a morsel of bread. The smallest mercy of God cannot be repaid by an eternity of our little services, much less can the unspeakable blessing of a new heart, a blessing that extends its happy influence through perpetual ages! I say, much less can this be purchased by a poor worm's listening, or praying, or crying. What! hath it ever entered the heart of a rational man to suppose that a few sighs, a few tears, a few moments' attendance to the proposals of the gospel, is the price to purchase a forfeited, happy eternity? God, therefore, being under no obligation to our merit, even after we have done all, need not bestow his grace. And this scheme represents him as sovereign in his gifts as sovereignty itself, or as the opposers of our doctrine can wish. You can conceive of nothing more sovereign and free, than that which is bestowed without any foundation of merit in the subject, but against merit. It is necessary that we

should attend in that way, but the necessity of our so attending doth not argue any desert in it, or that God is brought under any obligation; it only argues that God is sovereign in choosing the way of his bestowment, and even when we attend in that way, he is sovereign in bestowing, or not bestowing, as he pleases. We, therefore, cannot see any cause our opponents have to cry out against the doctrine, as tending to lead sinners to expect justification in part by their striving, and to leave only part of their justification to Christ. In this argument we have nothing to do with justification; and so much as to bring it in, by way of objection, is a gross impertinency, and only calculated to blind the unwary. Justification can only be founded on merit, and in this affair we plead for no merit at all; we insist there is none.

It is true, the sinner who is thus active, is less guilty than he who lives in rebellious contempt. But a bare absence of guilt, my being not so wicked, for instance, as Beelzebub, is no reason God should bestow peculiar favours on me; it is no positive merit, but only a reason why I should not be punished equally to another.

But, say our opposers, "Suppose the man who hath thus attended and sought for mercy, to meet with his miserable friend in eternity, who had neglected thus to seek, and died in his sins, would he not have a right to accost him thus, 'O thou miserable wretch! why didst thou not strive as I did, and have obtained mercy?'" hinting, that his seeking had in some degree deserved the favour. We answer, through rich grace, the saints have a prospect of

better judgments, than to be liable to the absurd mistake. The triumphant happy spirit would necessarily see, that although he had attended in the way which his Sovereign had made necessary to his salvation; yet his so attending (although it rendered him, as far as it went, less guilty) had no procuring merit in it; and far from ascribing the praise to himself, his Redeemer, who procured the blessing, would be all his song.

Only reason with yourselves, and you will find that the glorified saint, who sits upon a throne of more exalted eminence in the world above, will have just as much reason to exult over his inferior friend, as the saint will have over the sinner. For God is as sovereign, in the bestowment of superior degrees of grace, in the use of means, upon saints, as he is in giving grace to sinners at all. Our opponents cannot deny this, consistent with their own sentiments. And do you think that the most exalted spirit above will have an opportunity to boast over the inferior? You need not allege, that God hath bound himself by promise to his people, and therefore there is a difference; they may strive and obtain more grace. God never acts, God never promises under the gospel, but upon the footing of equity and merit. If he hath promised, it is not upon the footing of desert in them, but only in Christ, and that in their attendance upon the means of his institution. The saint cannot deserve the mercy by his doings, more than the sinner. The favour conferred on him is therefore as free grace, as that on the sinner; and if the sovereignty and freedom of grace is an argument against

endeavouring to obtain it, it was as much against the saint's endeavours, as against those of the sinner.

Thus we see, a proper attention to the plain distinction between the way in which, and the meritorious cause for which, entirely removes all the difficulty about boasting.

But you will say, "There is a wide difference; the saint can do actions that are spiritually good; the sinner can not, for he is represented as spiritually dead." We answer, this doth not at all alter the case, as to the the sovereignty of God's bestowment, unless it be supposed that the spirituality of these actions does really merit such a bestowment; but this our opponents cannot allow, upon their own principles. And if their spiritual actions do not justify, or merit, they are as much the subjects of pure mercy, as the sinner. This brings us to our fourth proposition.

4. Though the unconverted can do nothing that is spiritually good, yet they can do what is materially good; nor is this distinction vain. The matter and the form of duty are most obviously distinct. Praying is the matter of a duty —with faith is the form of it. Hearing is the matter of a duty—with love is the form; doing alms is the matter; from a principle of divine charity is the form. Where these good dispositions are wanting, the form of the duty is bad, though the performer is, nevertheless, not so guilty as he who neglects matter and form both. Now the sinner can pray, he can hear, he can do alms, he can do things materially good, though not formally so. The performance of these duties, as a natural man can perform them, is the way in which

God usually confers his grace, for Christ's sake, although *they* do not merit it; and such performance leaves him less guilty, than if he did not perform them at all. The one is only an improper compliance, the other an open, affronting denial. If this is not a truth, then you can make no difference, as to guilt, between the most profligate, and him who is only outwardly moral. It is as absurd, therefore, as it is shocking, that some oppose the use of any means by men in their natural estate, under the notion that they only render themselves more guilty than they would be without them. It is not only contrary to reason, and sides with the cursed suggestions of the wicked heart, but opens a door to all licentiousness.

OBJECTION. "But will God ever reward duties sinfully performed?" It is not a reward that we look for in the present case; it is not a reward that we would have sinners expect. They are only to attend upon God in the way in which he ordinarily takes notice of sinners, hoping that sovereign pity will deign to light on them, and confessing that they may with justice be abandoned after all.

5. Our fifth and last proposition is founded on the rest, viz: the man who carefully attends upon the means of grace, and seeks for the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit, hath all the encouragement which fallen, sinful creatures should dare to ask; but those who live in the avowed neglect of the gospel have no encouragement at all.

As for the former, he is encouraged from the gospel scheme. He knows that Christ has died to make it possible for such to come to God. He knows that he hath

purchased the Holy Spirit for that very purpose; he knows that faith cometh by hearing, and that God ordinarily bestows his grace by the instrumentality of these means. And is not this a sufficient encouragement to make them attend upon them?

As to those who live in the avowed neglect of the gospel, they have no encouragement to hope for grace at all. When they look at the general course of his proceeding, they cannot hope from that. As to the motives and means in the gospel, they withdraw themselves from them. And to hope that God will convert them in an extraordinary and miraculous way, is as absurd as to hope that he will change the course of nature. What if he hath done it in a few instances? So he hath caused the sun to stand still, but is it to be expected that he will always do so, and especially, that he will make thee a signal instance, when thou, presuming on that, dost make it a foundation to abuse him?

But of all, methinks there can be no idea more detestable to our rational nature, than that propagated by some, viz: that the most presumptuous, heaven-daring sinner, is in as fair a way to meet with God's favour, as he who is seeking for grace as a natural man may seek. Nay, say some, he is in a fairer way, for publicans and harlots should enter the kingdom of heaven, sooner than the self-righteous Pharisees.

Those publicans and harlots, who came to our Lord, and sought for his favour, it is true, were in a more likely way to obtain it, than those self-conceited men, the whited

sepulchres, who denied him, and despised the only Saviour of mankind. But to suppose that publicans and harlots, in general, have a fairer prospect than the moral seeker, not only contradicts all our notions of God's working on the heart, by the means and motives of the gospel, which cannot be in the case of him who never attends to them; but it casts a most horrible reflection upon the very nature of God, as if he were inclined most to mercy, where the most abominable guilt is, and therefore the more accursed our crimes, the nearer to heaven. Oh, infernal blasphemy! Upon this plan—go on, ye profane! Laugh at heaven, despise the terrors of God, blaspheme the awful name, excel hell itself, and cause the damned to shudder at superior crimes! The more execrable, the more to be exalted! And ye infidels, ye atheists of every name, ye who most disbelieve and most contemn the gospel, ye have the fairest prospects of salvation by it!

It is in vain that you attempt to excuse the blasphemous insinuation, by saying that it gives more glory to the grace of God. Is it giving more glory to his grace to say, that it is readier to alight on a greater transgressor than on a small one? that the more guilty, the more fit objects for his mercy? Does this give a lovely idea of the best of beings? We do not deny that he can, and does make some examples of his grace among the most profligate, to show the happy extent of his gospel: to show that Christ is able to save even them. But to argue from hence, that it is more agreeable to his nature, than to let his mercy fall upon smaller transgressors, is blasphemous and false; and

even to say that he makes as many instances of grace, among the former as among the latter, is also false. The least vicious have no claim to his favour by that, as it is no virtue or real merit in me, that I am not so bad as the devil. Yet to say that the vicious are not farther off from God, and of consequence that their salvation is not more improbable, implies blasphemy. And if the gospel, my beloved brethren, gives you any such notion of God; if it renders the salvation of the greatest sinner only as probable as that of the least, oh, be terrified! the gospel encourages the presumptuous sinner, and you ought not to receive it. Reject, then, that impious book, that gives so false an idea of infinite perfection, and serves to poison the already poisoned souls of mankind. But rather blast the wretched pen, which would palm on inspiration, doctrines of which this is the plain consequence; and thus, under the guise of friendship, betray the cause like Judas!

But to sum up the whole. If God ordinarily bestows his grace in the use and by the instrumentality of certain means, and thereby hath rendered our attendance upon those means necessary; if our attendance upon those means infers no obligation upon God by way of merit, but leaves him still sovereign in his bestowment; if he who strives hath sufficient encouragement, and he who does not hath none; what shall we conclude? What, but that it is reasonable and warrantable to urge home the advice of my text upon sinners? Strive to enter the strait gate.

II. A few objections remain to be answered.

1. "The essence of true religion," say some, "seems to

consist in an entire *willingness* to return to God through Christ. Now, it appears absurd to suppose that a man can make himself willing; for it is to be supposed that we are willing already when we strive."

We answer, common experience may contradict this, for who knows not, that often our rational judgment and our practical judgment contradict each other? "What I would, that do I not, and what I would not, that do I," could an apostle say. In my depraved state, I often find myself unwilling to do what my reason dictates. And when I am convinced that the ways of holiness are best in themselves, and lead to life; when my conscience approves them, and yet I find my heart reluctant, may I not sit down and calmly strive to reason myself into willingness? Are not the people of God often obliged to do this when they find reluctance within? Why, then, may not the sinner use this means, and many others? And how know you that God will not render them effectual to that end? So that you see we may be unwilling and yet strive.

2. OBJECTION. "The apostle gave no such direction to the trembling jailer, who asked what he should do to be saved. We find his reply is only, 'Believe.'"

The apostle answered according to the question, which proceeded from pagan ignorance of the *terms* of salvation. And such also should be our answer, when a blind heathen is solicitous what is required of him, as a suspending term of salvation. But if we are asked what is the most probable way to have this faith implanted, the question is different, and we must answer as in our text.

3. "But is not this setting up a new law of works?" Yes, if we made our doings the procuring cause for which, or the means of our justification. But when we exclude them from having the least share in it, and only admit them as the most probable way to get faith, we are not afraid of this imputation.

4. But it is objected, in the fourth place, that "sinners are already so prone to depend upon these attempts, tc recommend them to God, that it is dangerous to direct them." And if they are prone to turn good into evil, shall we not therefore insist upon their duty? All that can follow from this argument is, that we should be extremely careful to show them, that no dependence is to be placed upon anything but Christ for justification.

5. "Who then maketh us to differ? If the first step towards this is our own, may we not claim a share in the event?" No more than the lifeless, impotent tool of the carver can claim a share in the excellency of a fine performance in carving. If the preacher can claim no share in the conversion of that soul, which, without the energy of the Divine Spirit, had remained in the chains of sin, sure the hearer must be silent. Suppose I laboured under a dangerous disease, and by the order of my physician, it became necessary that I should wait upon him in a certain place; suppose me in effect cured by his prescriptions, should not I be laughed at, if I assumed to myself any praise of the cure, because I had complied with that order? Hearer, apply it.

6. As to those objections brought against us by a cer-

tain sophistical and splenetic pen, (with which popularity seems to be the greatest crime,) drawn from the popularity of this doctrine, they are insufficient and false.

Insufficient, inasmuch as although we confess that many of the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel are disgusting to the carnal mind, yet we cannot thence infer, that every doctrine which is not so is not a Christian doctrine. For many of the doctrines of Christianity are so self evident and really pleasing to the rational mind, that they do not disgust even the wicked; and the case hath been known when even a pagan emperor desired of an august assembly that the man Jesus should be enrolled among their gods, on account of some of his doctrines. But the objection to our plan is

2. *False.* It is far from pleasing the carnal taste. The carnal mind ever hates the divine sovereignty, and we represent the deity, *first*, sovereign in designing to bestow grace at all; *secondly*, sovereign in his conditions; *thirdly*, sovereign in his choice of the way or manner in which sinners must attend; and at last he is sovereign in bestowing or not bestowing at all, even after we strive to obtain it. And this idea of the divine sovereignty is, at least, as mortifying to the carnal mind, as that opinion of our opponents, who represent the most base of mankind as near to heaven as the moral seeker after divine grace. Let none of us, therefore, my brethren, give into that specious trap, and suppose, that, because the promulgator of such pernicious doctrines meets with deserved contempt, they, therefore, must be genuine Christianity.

Our discourse concludes with a few remarks upon the pernicious tendency of the doctrine we oppose, and with a short application to such as our text is addressed to in particular.

1. The doctrine we oppose, in the first place, tends to give an unlovely idea of the nature of God, as being *equally* inclined to have mercy upon the most abhorred, as upon the least so. And here, be not afraid that it can be replied, that we represent the sovereign majesty as actuated by a view of real merit in the least vicious, which is not in him which is more so. We have already observed, and it is evident to common sense, that the not being so wicked is no positive claim to peculiar favours. An absence of guilt can only procure an absence of punishment, but not positive blessings.

2. The contrary doctrine represents all the means which are used with sinners, under the gospel, as useless; and thus all those calls, those motives, those tender arguments addressed to sinners—arguments in which all the bowels of heaven seem to sound—are to be esteemed as useless lumber. For unless they are to be attended to, of what use are they? If they are necessary and useful, must it not be the duty of sinners to attend to them? And if so, what is the guilt of those who would prevail with sinners to contemn their duty, and to omit, alas! what they are too much inclined to omit already.

3. But, what is most shocking, they who would discourage the strivings of the unconverted, only join with the reluctant wicked heart, and join with the enemy of

God and man, to encourage a continuance in sin. It is well known that the carnal heart is only to be worked upon by motives of profit and fear, that are present. If, therefore, their present prospects, as to the favour of God, are wholly the same, whether they serve their abandoned lusts to the utmost or not; whether they seek for divine mercy in the abstinence from gross sins, or wholly give themselves up to wickedness; then what single motive have we to restrain them? It is vain to tell them that they will be more miserable hereafter—*hereafter* never affects them as the present. They are void of that faith, which is the evidence of things not seen; and unless they have the prospect of some present advantage, they will not abstain. "We can but be damned," say they; "then let us fill up our measure, since it is as probable that in this way we shall meet with favour as in any other." This is the conclusion the wicked are apt to draw, in spite of all our endeavours to the contrary; this is the excuse they plead, and methinks there is little need to confirm it. We dare appeal to every wicked heart here present, and it must confess, that it frequently brings our opponents' doctrine as a plea for its licentiousness; and we now call to witness the effects, the sad and horrible effects, which have followed wherever the fatal doctrine hath been preached. Only let it be proclaimed from this desk, that the most vicious are in as likely a way to obtain divine grace, as he who is seeking it in a moral life, and you will directly hear it in the mouth of every impious debauchee, as a justifying argument. The secure sinner makes it a reason for his

carelessness, and contempt of every ordinance. The duties of the family and the closet are neglected; and those who have been baptized, lead the life of pagans. Well did you collect your household churches, ye faithful servants of the Most High! Well did you warn your sons and daughters to turn a deaf ear to the preacher, and to avoid the fatal rock. *

O my beloved brethren! it is painful to see the consequences which have followed, and which must follow, in places where the infernal scheme hath been broached. Let me conclude by earnestly entreating the secure and careless, that they will not suffer themselves to be deceived, either by the suggestions of a wicked heart, by the enemy of God and man, or even by this—what shall I name it? —infernal machination. Ye who are in the broad road to destruction, who are unwilling to struggle in the narrow paths of virtue and life, oh, reflect, where do those gay and sprightly ways conduct you? Doth not eternal death hold his domain before you? Why, for a few moments' guilty pleasure, would you abandon yourself to eternal pains? The gay mob, it is true, is with you; but why should that encourage you? Oh, learn to look upon them only as oxen, who, though trimmed with garlands, and playing down an easy passage, are devoted to slaughter.

The Saviour of mankind hath opened a safe retreat from death. The Saviour of mankind, out of disinterested com-

* We have understood, that some worthy persons have found themselves obliged, upon hearing such doctrines, to call their families together and warn them against it.

passion, invites you to "strive to enter the strait gate." Your souls, your eternity join in the important demand; and all that should influence a rational being urges home the proposal. In this, it is true, you will be opposed by the world, with all its scorn and malice, the flesh with all its corrupt inclinations, and by the devil with every art his long practised cunning can invent; and, therefore, striving, struggling, nay, agonizing will be necessary. That careless, indolent life will never do. But remember, a whole immortality—the love of Jehovah himself is the prize.

And let it not discourage you, that God, and God alone, must be the great efficient. Were it to be performed by a man, or even by an angel, you would have some room for discouragement; but infinite benevolence, the eternal fountain of goodness and grace, is He to whom your suit is directed.

Let me, therefore, conclude with the apostle's exhortation to this purpose, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling." For why? "Knowing that it is God who worketh in us to will and to do," and that it is of his own "good pleasure." Amen.

JOHN TENNENT.

The Rev. John Tennent, the third son of the Rev. William Tennent, Sen., was born in the County of Armagh, in Ireland, the 12th of Nov., 1707. The whole of his education he obtained under the paternal roof and in the Log College.

We have a most interesting narrative of his conversion, from the pen of his brother Gilbert, showing the fearful nature of his convictions of sin, danger, and misery; from which, after an agony almost uninterrupted for four days and nights, he was signally relieved and filled with joy and praise.

When he had finished his preparatory studies in the Log College, he presented himself to the Presbytery of Philadelphia; and after passing with credit the usual trials, he was licensed to preach the gospel. Soon after his licensure, he visited the congregation of Freehold, in the County of Monmouth, New Jersey, which was now without a pastor. Being a young man of uncommon modesty and humility, he was very reluctant to go, and even after he had consented to visit them, he regretted the engagement very much; for it seemed to him that they were a people whom God had given up for the abuse of the gospel. But though he went under this cloud of discouragement, his first labours among this people were remarkably blessed. On his first visit, he preached four or five Sabbaths, and found among the people a serious disposition to attend to the concerns of their souls, and to search the scriptures, to see whether the things they heard from the pulpit were so. And he was assisted to preach with so much freedom, that he told his

brother William, that he was fully persuaded that Christ Jesus had a large harvest to bring home there; and though they were a poor broken people, yet, if they called him, he would go to them though he should be under the necessity of begging his bread. On the 15th of April, 1730, they assembled and gave him a unanimous call, which he accepted, and was ordained Nov. 19th, of the same year.

His labours in this congregation, according to his brother Gilbert, were attended with three notable qualities: prudence, diligence, and success. Though the time was short which he was permitted to remain among them, yet his labours were abundant. His race was swift and vehement, and his heart was so fixed on the work of God, that he could not be persuaded to desist from his public labours, even when his body was emaciated and debilitated by a consumptive disease; and when, in the judgment of physicians, it was prejudicial to his broken constitution. As his death drew near, his love for his people and concern for their welfare increased, and he would often express himself in such language as the following: "I am grieved for my people, for I fear they will be left to wander as sheep without a shepherd, or get one that will pull down what I have poorly endeavoured to build up." His brother who watched with him in his sickness, has frequently overheard him in the deep silence of the night wrestling with God by prayer, with sobs and tears, for his people.

His last words were like those of some of the old martyrs. A few minutes before he expired, holding his brother William by the hand, he broke out into the following rapturous expressions: "Farewell, my brethren, farewell, father and mother; farewell, world with all thy vain delights. Welcome, God and Father—welcome, sweet Lord Jesus—welcome, death—welcome, eternity. Amen." Then with a loud voice he said, "Lord Jesus, come, Lord Jesus." And so he fell asleep in Christ. His death occurred on the 23d of April, 1732, in the twenty-fifth year of his age.

REGENERATION OPENED.

A SERMON BY THE REV. JOHN TENNENT.

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John iii. 3.

THESE words are part of a remarkable dialogue between Christ and Nicodemus, in which Nicodemus's fear, ignorance, and willingness to be taught are principally bewrayed. He was one of the Pharisees, as we are informed from the first verse of this chapter, who in general were stated enemies against Christ and his gospel. These Pharisees were proud separatists, who, upon the opinion of their own righteousness, despised all others.

As to his station, he was a ruler, as the word *archōn* signifies. This man, being in a high and eminent station, through fear of incurring the anger or displeasure of the Jewish Sanhedrim by openly professing Christ, came to him by night, verse 2. Thus we see what clogs, hindrances, and impediments, honour, grandeur, and greatness are in the way of the profession and practice of truth and holiness; yet it is evident from the words of Nicodemus in the second verse, notwithstanding his fears to acknow-

ledge openly the truth of Christ's mission from the Father, that he had a well grounded persuasion of it from the miracles the blessed Jesus had wrought. "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do those miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." But certainly, it is of vast consequence and importance, that the gross ignorance and strange stupidity of this learned man, a teacher in Israel, concerning the vital part of piety, are so perspicuously detected in our text and context. "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily."— In the words are three things remarkable, I. A proposition. II. An asseveration. III. The implicit occasion of them both.

I. The proposition in these words, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." In it there are two things, 1. The subject, a man. 2. The predicate, or that which is spoken concerning the subject, "be born again."

1. As to the subject, a man. This indefinite expression (the matter so requiring as the present case is) is equipollent, or equivalent to a universal. It is as much as if he had said, every one, of whatsoever order, or character, or age, or nation, great or small, rich or poor, noble or ignoble, learned or unlearned, young or old, Jew or Gentile, bond or free, male or female, must be born again, or they cannot see the kingdom of God. Gal. vi. 15. Heb. xii. 14. 1 Pet. i. 23. 2 John i. 13. John iii. 7. 1 John ii. 29. iii. 9. v. 4.

2. The predicate, which being complex, treats of two

things, viz: 1. Of happiness under that term the "kingdom of God." 2. The qualification universally necessary to obtain it, which is "being born again;" *ean me tis gennethe anothen.* The Greek word *anothen* is generally rendered *superne*, from above, but the tenor of our context, especially Nicodemus's answer to Christ, "How can a man enter the second time?" (ver. 4.) sufficiently proves that it signifies as much here as *deuteron*, or again, *ouk dunatai idein ten basileian tou Theou;* "he cannot see the kingdom of God." By seeing here, I understand possessing, according to that phrase of the Romans, *Hereditatem cernere.* A proof of this we have in our Lord's sermon on the Mount, (Matt. v. 8,) "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God," *i. e.*, they shall see him to their comfort, see him so as to enjoy him, see him as a Friend and Father, and possess him as a satisfying portion. "Cannot—" an unregenerate man is under a threefold impotency in regard of the enjoyment of God's kingdom.

1. Natural. He must take this kingdom by main force, out of the hands of a just and infinite God, if he gets it at all, while he remains in this state. Now what power has a guilty worm to do this, whose foundation is in the dust, and who is crushed before the moth? Job iv. 19.

2. Moral. He is a subject utterly unqualified for the pure pleasures that kingdom affords, being universally corrupt, and subject to the government of sin and sense.

3. Judicial. He is disseized of, and separated from, this inheritance, by the sentence of Christ, the judge of quick and dead; which no power in heaven or earth can reverse;

for he that liveth and was dead, carries the keys of hell and death at his girdle. Rev. i. 18.

An unregenerate person, as such, neither can, nor shall see the kingdom of heaven, so as to inherit it, if there be power enough in God and Christ to keep him out; for this Christ gives his word in pawn, which he will surely accomplish. Now there is a three-fold kingdom made mention of in the holy scriptures.

1. A kingdom of God's providence, established upon the basis of God's uncontrollable power, and unsearchable wisdom. 1 Chron. xxix. 11. Jacob's God has the reins of government on his shoulders, he wields the eternal sceptre, and sits at the sacred helm.

2. The kingdom of God's grace in the church; built upon Christ, the golden foundation, the chief corner stone; this kingdom is given to the Branch by God the Father, as the inspired evangelist testifies. Luke i. 32.

3. A kingdom of glory and blessedness: "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." Matt. xxv. 34. This last mentioned I take to be the kingdom designed by Jesus in the text, viz: that triumphant choir in which the saints and angels sing eternal hallelujahs to the everlasting King. Heaven is called a kingdom, because in it God rules his sons and subjects. God's kingdom is where he reigns: now he reigns in righteousness. "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever! a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." Heb. i. 8.

II. The asseveration, Verily, verily. This asseveration is a conspicuous confirmation of the truth of the proposi-

tion, tending clearly to manifest the great momentousness and importance of it. There are two things in the asseveration which serve to establish inviolably the veracity or truth of the proposition, viz: 1. The repetition of the particle "amen." 2. The dignity of the speaker. The word "amen," rendered "verily" in the text, is twofold, either prefixed or affixed; when it is prefixed, or put before a proposition, it is the note of a certain and earnest affirmation, as in the words of our text, Verily, verily. When it is affixed, or subsequent to a proposition, it notes two things: either 1. The assent of the mind, will, affections, as at the conclusion of the creed and the Lord's prayer. Or 2. An asseveration, or certain affirmation, as the word amen, at the end of the Lord's prayer, signifies not only our assent to, but assurance of, the reality and certainty of the things therein contained. Now the repetition of this particle in our text, like the redoubling of Pharaoh's dream, (Gen. xli. 32,) shows us at once the undeniable certainty and great weight of the thing spoken of.

2. The dignity of the speaker: who is it that speaks thus? The blessed and holy Jesus, as our text informs us; which name some derive from *iemi*, a word that signifies to send, because the Lord Jesus is the bright angel, the faithful messenger of the everlasting covenant. Mal. iii. 1. Heb. iii. 2. Others, from *iao*, a word that signifies to heal, because the Lord Jesus was the true physician. Matt. ix. 12, Mark ii. 17. Basil and Cyril among the ancients are of this opinion.

But the angel explains the true derivation of it. "And

thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." Matt. i. 21. And that not only typically, as Moses and Joshua, and others, but really and truly. Nor 2. only temporally, as those before mentioned, just from bodily miseries, but from spiritual and eternal, from sin and death. Heb. ii. 14. 1 Cor. xv. 55—57. 1 John iii. 8. 3. Neither did he only free his people from misery, as Moses did Israel out of Egypt; no, but as his type Joshua led Israel into Canaan, so does the blessed Jesus, the anti-type, introduce his people into a state of endless, uninterrupted, and unspeakably ravishing delight, in the imperial paradise, of which the earthly Canaan was but a dark figure. Now, I say the dignity of the person speaking in our text, gives great weight and confirmation to the truth spoken. Will he, who is truth itself, lie? Will he, who is the great prophet of his people, co-equal and co-eternal with his Father, the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person, (Heb. xiii. 4, 8,) deceive us? I say unto you: I, who am the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: the King of kings, and Lord of lords, and Prince of the kings of the earth.

As to the third particular, the ground or occasion of the words of our text, implied in that phrase, "Jesus answered:" it is difficult to find out what were the words Nicodemus spake, to which Jesus gave answer; there is a diversity of opinions about it. Some think that Christ's words are a direct answer to those words of Nicodemus mentioned in the second verse, as if Christ had said, Thou lookest upon me as a prophet only, thou canst do no otherwise unless

thou wert regenerated. Others think, and that more probably, that from the good opinion Nicodemus had of Christ, he asked the way to salvation, and that our text is an answer to that question.

From the words thus briefly explained, there arise these two doctrinal observations, the one implied, and the other expressed.

Observation I. That man from his very birth is depraved.

Observation II. That regeneration is absolutely necessary in order to obtain eternal salvation.

As to the first of these which is this, That man from his very birth is depraved.

The method I design to follow in prosecuting this doctrine is

1. To prove the truth of it.
2. Explain the nature of it.
3. To improve it. And

1. I am to consider the truth of the doctrine. This is plain from the text, for if the first birth was not vitiated, what need would there be of a second? The royal prophet Isaiah upbraids Israel with this, "And was called a transgressor from the womb." Isa. xlviii. 8. The psalmist gives testimony to the same truth, (Psa. li. 5,) "I was shapen in sin," not only corrupted with sin as soon as born, but before, even in our formation. Job confirms this in the fourteenth chapter of his book, verse 4, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." Yea, the blessed Jesus makes this the ground of the necessity

of a change in the seventh verse of our context, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh:" as if Christ should say, You need not wonder, Nicodemus, at my inculcation of the necessity of this inward change or new birth; because men are corrupted from their first birth. This original depravity is conveyed to all the sons of Adam by generation, unless prevented by a miracle, as in Christ. The sickness and death of infants are a plain and unanswerable proof of this; "For the wages of sin is death." Rom. vi. 23. Also the baptismal laver shows this hereditary contagion and infection. But

2. I am to explain the nature of this depravity, which consists chiefly in these three things, viz:

1. In a privation of good.
2. In an antipathy to God.
3. In a propensity to evil.

1. Then, in every unregenerate soul there is a privation of all good. There is no spark or signature of that pristine, beautiful image engraven at first on the soul by God; no relics of man's primitive righteousness, neither in habit or in act, in inclination or motion, that is spiritually good; "In my flesh," *i. e.*, in my nature considered as corrupted, "there dwells no good thing." Rom. vii. 18. The soul is deprived of its ancient ornaments and furniture; it is left poor without spiritual riches, blind without saving knowledge, naked without spiritual raiment. Rev. iii. 17. And

2. There is an antipathy to God, his ways, his people, his image. "The carnal mind is enmity to God." Rom.

viii. 7. This is evident from the speech and practice of wicked people, their embittered jeers, and satirical invectives against God's people. A Cain hated an Abel, and an Ishmael an Isaac, and an Esau a Jacob, and that because of their goodness. 1 John iii. 12. Now, this hellish spite is to be found in all natural, unregenerate people, till removed by the supernatural change, of which I design to speak afterwards. I now proceed to the

3d Particular contained in this depravity, which is the propensity that is in all unconverted people to every evil. "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child." Prov. xxii. 15. Indeed, there is not an equal propensity in all, to every sin; no, for some by reason of their natural temperament, manner of education, or custom, are inclined to one sin more than some others; yet all men by nature are virtually disposed to every sin; for we are prone to evil, as the sparks fly upward. Job v. 7. Every sin is formed in our nature; they want only time, opportunity, temptation, and the removal of restraining grace, to bring them forth into action.

Use. Hence we are informed 1, of man's miserable and deplorable state by nature, which affords us sufficient matter for the deepest humiliation, and most doleful lamentation. It is on this account that we are rendered obnoxious to the vindictive justice of a terrible and holy God. Eph. ii. 3. This is it, that makes our lives so corrupted, and all our religious services so defective and depraved.

2. This informs us of the absolute necessity of a universal change, of heart as well as practice, in order to ob-

tain fellowship and communion with a holy sin-hating God here, (1 John i. 6,) or the more full enjoyment of him in the life to come. How can there be a sweet communion, and full enjoyment, without love? And how can there be love without likeness? And pray what likeness or resemblance is there between an infinitely pure God, and an unconverted sinner, who is a very mass of pollution and defilement? How can that God who is glorious in holiness, fix his complacential love upon that which is the object of his eternal abhorrence? And how can an unrenewed sinner, who is filled with enmity against God, (Rom. viii. 7,) fix his highest love upon one he hates with an implacable hatred? All which considered, complexly shows us the absolute necessity of a universal change; which naturally leads me to the second observation, which is,

That regeneration is absolutely necessary in order to obtain eternal salvation.

This is evident from the words of our text, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Also from Gal. vi. 15; "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails any thing, but a new creature. Therefore if any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, and all things are become new." "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." Heb. xii. 14. "And there shall in no wise enter into it, any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." Rev. xxi. 27.

In prosecuting this doctrine, I shall endeavour to observe the following method.

I. Show negatively what regeneration is not.

II. Positively show what it is

III. Propose those reasons that urge the necessity of it.

IV. Improve it.

As to the first proposed, which was to show what regeneration is not. And,

1. It is not what Nicodemus grossly conceived, a re-entry into the womb of our mother. It is surprising that a man of so polite literature as we have reason to believe Nicodemus was: a master, a teacher in Israel; acquainted with the law and word of God, where doubtless he had read frequently such passages as those, (Ezek. xxxvi. 26,) should have such gross conceptions of this work of God; but hereby are these sayings of God verified, (1 Cor. i. 21, & ii. 14,) "For in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God; but the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Such is the inherent hereditary contagion of our apostatized nature, that were we born a thousand times in a natural way, it would not remedy that malady. This the blessed and holy Jesus plainly and clearly confirms in the sixth verse of our context, That which is born of the flesh, is flesh, *i. e.*, it is corrupted and contaminated.

Hence it appears to be a prodigy of incomparable folly for any to boast of, and glory in, the grandeur of their descent and lineage, seeing that whatsoever is born of the

flesh is flesh, and without outward cultivation, and inward renovation, must be the subjects of indelible misery. Neither

2. Is regeneration a change of the essence, or being of the soul (*hæc semper eadem physicè manet*): the soul is not made new as to its being or substance (*aut quoad esse physicum*,) other ways a new soul must be infused, which we read not of; but as to its qualities (*aut quoad esse morale*), new qualities or principles of action are infused into the soul by God, by which it is inclined and swayed after another manner, and to another scope, than formerly. Some do talk strangely of this affair, that the substance of the soul is changed. It is true, the scripture calls this gracious change a participation of the divine nature. 2 Pet. i. 4. But this is only to show 1. the reality and fixedness of this work of grace, that it is no notion or fancy, but a solid reality; 2. the resemblance it bears to the divine perfections. Such persons are renewed after God's image, in knowledge, righteousness and holiness; they have a divine temper and disposition of soul; the principal bias of their hearts is towards God and his service. But though they are thus born after God, and of God, yet they are not thereby made God. That which is by way of substance or essence in him, is only by way of accident in us. Neither

3. Doth it consist in an outward profession of Christ or his ways. The foolish virgins had large lamps, but no oil. Matt. xxv. A man may be reformed from Paganism or Popery to the profession of true Christianity, and yet be a stranger to this work of God. Nor

4. In the enjoyment of outward privileges, such as baptism, the Lord's Supper, and others of the like nature. The Jews of old depended upon these outward privileges and prerogatives. Jer. vii. 4. Rom. x. 3. And so do many of the gospelized world now; but the divinely inspired Jeremiah pungently inculcates the invalidity of outward ordinances, without the thing signified by them, to obtain bliss and glory; therefore, he puts the circumcised Jews, who were uncircumcised in heart, in a parallel case with Edom, Ammon, and Moab, heathenish nations. Jer. ix. 25. Yea, Christ himself had a controversy with the Jews upon the same account; he endeavoured to destroy their fond hopes of heaven, grounded upon their outward privileges, and for his plain dealing he received abusive treatment. John viii. The apostle Paul very plainly showeth the insufficiency of these things without an inward renovation. Gal. vi. 15. Neither

5. Doth it consist in an external conformity to the law of God: for this is something inward, the workmanship of God in the heart. A man may pray, read, hear outwardly, keep the Sabbath, be faithful to his word, and just in his dealings, and yet be a stranger to this work of God in the soul: for such were some of the Pharisees of old. Phil. iii. 6. Mark x. 20. And yet our ascended Lord and Saviour positively avers, that unless our righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, we shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. Matt. v. 20. Nor

6. In a restraint of the old man. God restrains many whom he never renews. So he did Abimelech, a heathen.

Gen. xx. 6. One that is not renewed may avoid gross sins, through fear, shame, or the absence of opportunities and temptations, or through the influence of nature's light, the precepts of morality, the doctrines of the gospel, and the civil laws of the land. The apostle Peter speaks of some that had escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord Christ, and yet were again entangled in them. 2 Pet. ii. 20—22. Restraining grace keeps only from the outward acts of sin, through slavish fear, or some selfish motives; but saving grace subdues sin at the root, and raises an irreconcilable hatred in the soul against it. 2 Cor. vii. 11. Nor

7. In common gifts or motions of the Holy Spirit, which are without distinction conferred on both the elect and reprobate. It is not a gift of prayer, tongues, utterance, or a faculty of unfolding scripture difficulties. Judas had all or most of these, yet was he not born again, but a son of perdition. John xvii. 12. "It is not with men as with trees," as one observes, "for every bud, blossom, or leaf, argues some life in the tree; but every ability to preach or to pray, does not prove this supernatural life in us." Neither does it consist in the common motions of the Holy Spirit, such as some sight of sin, some grief for it, and wishes after amendment. Personal afflictions, a prospect of eternity in sickness, or other such alarming occurrences may cause such like workings. Herod delighted to hear John the Baptist. Mark vi. 20. Felix trembled when he heard Paul preach. Acts xxiv. 25. And Agrippa was almost persuaded; *en oligo*, which compared with Paul's

answer, ver. 29, Acts xxvi. 28, may be justly rendered "all to a little." And even wicked Balaam could wish for a happy death, though he did not so well relish a holy life. "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Num. xxiii. 10. 2 Pet. ii. 15. Nor

8. Does regeneration consist in a partial change of the soul, or of some of its faculties only; but it is a total change of the soul in all its powers. There may be strange changes in some of the faculties, and yet no true conversion to God; as particularly, 1. There may be great light and knowledge of divine truths, with an assent to, and persuasion of, their veracity, in the mind. "And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have no charity (or love, for so the word *agape* signifies), I am nothing." 1 Cor. xiii. 2. Also, "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened," Heb. vi. 4. Rom. ii. 17, 18. Here we see the understanding, the directive power, may be so illuminated by the Spirit of God, as to perceive divine truths with a more clear and affecting view than before, without a saving change. Also the will, which is a cardinal faculty of man's soul, may be much bowed, and almost persuaded in some of the unregenerate. Acts xxvi. 28. Again, the conscience, another power, or as some say, a reflex act of the mind, may be much awakened by the terror of God upon the account of sin. Gen. iv. 13, 14. Acts xxiv. 25. Also the

passions may be in some measure changed in the unregenerate: they may have great sorrow for sin. 1 Kings xxi. 27. Matt. xxvii. 4, 5; joy and delight from divine objects; Heb. vi. 4; Matt. xiii. 20; and in attendance upon divine ordinances; John v. 35. Isa. lviii. 2; desires after Christ; Mal. iii. 2. John vi. 34; after grace; Matt. xxv. 8; after heaven; Num. xxiii. 10; some hatred against sin; Rom. ii. 22. 2 Kings x. 26—28; some purposes to forsake it; Num. xxii. 17, 18; some love to God; Jer. ii. 2. Deut. ix. 6, 24; compared with Christ; Matt. x. 37; to the people of God in general; this, the parable of the wise and foolish virgins proves; Matt. xxv; for it is probable that the foolish would not have associated and dwelt with the wise so as they did, unless they had loved them; Gal. iv. 7; to faithful, soul-searching ministers in particular; Mark vi. 20; some fear of God; James ii. 19; Jonah i. 10, 16; some zeal for God; 2 Kings x. 6. Phil. 3, 6. Rom. x. 2; some faith in God; Acts viii. 13. Job ii. 23, 24; some dependence and reliance upon God; Mic. iii. 11. 2 Chron. xiii. 5—13 & 18, compared with Deut. ix. 6, 24 & 1 Kings xv. 3; some confident persuasion of their interest in his special favour and friendship; Matt. xxv. 7, 11. Job viii. 33. 2 Chron. xiii. 10. Num. xxii. 18. All these things I have mentioned under this head, people may have, and yet want regenerating grace, and so be damned at last. But I proceed to consider the 2d thing proposed, which was to show positively what regeneration is. And

I. More generally, it may be said to be a restoration of

God's defaced image in man, to some degree of its primitive beauty and lustre. Our first parents were made after God's image, in knowledge, righteousness and true holiness, with dominion over the creatures. Ecc. vii. 29. Gen. i. 27. Psa. viii. 5. This image of God consisted in a universal rectitude of the whole soul, with all its faculties, powers and affections; the understanding being the guide and governor of the soul's faculties, had clear perceptions of the mind and will of God; the will was subject to the understanding's directions, having an inherent inclination to will that which the mind by its native light showed to be good. The whole train of passions freely followed the guidance of these superior powers, without the least reluctance. Thus there was a universal harmony at first among all the soul's faculties established by the God of order, but sin has introduced a confusion and chaos among these faculties, it has darkened the understanding, rendered the will obstinate, and misplaced the affections upon diametrically opposite objects, hardened the heart, stupefied the conscience. Now the blind will, which was before a subject, usurps the empire, and hurries the other powers to a compliance with its inordinate dictates. Now regeneration is a renewing that gracious image of God in us, which we have lost; for by it, the blind understanding is in some measure enlightened; Acts xxvi. 18; the stony heart mollified; Ezek. xxxvi. 26; the disordered affections rectified and fixed upon the most suitable and noble objects, God himself as their chief good and last end.

But more particularly,

A law work generally precedes this change; hence the law is said to be a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ; Gal. iii. 24; which I apprehend is wrought in the following manner.

1. There is a discovery of sin, which the Lord effects by the law and by the Spirit. "I had not known sin, but by the law." Rom. vii. 7. Before this, Christless sinners are secure, like Peter sleeping in his chains. Acts xii. 6. The Spirit of God concurs with the law. This is one of his first works with unconverted sinners; as is evident from Job xvi. 8. Before he convinces them of righteousness, he convinces them of sin; their eyes are opened. Acts xxvi. 18. Now they see sin in its loathsome nature, deplorable circumstances, and dreadful consequences; they begin to see the holiness of God, the spiritual latitude of his law, and their own corrupt nature; then are they apt to cry out, Who can stand before this great and dreadful God? Now, though this discovery of sin begins at a particular evil, as with the Jews, (Acts ii. 37,) yet it proceeds to more; as Ezekiel was led to divers parts of the temple to see greater and greater abominations. Ezek. viii. 6—13.

2. There is an application of the merit of sin. God convinces the sinner that all the threatenings belong to him; yea, he particularly applies them to himself, as Nathan his parabolical discourse to David, (2 Sam. xii. 7,) I am the man that these curses are directed against. He hears his condemnation sounded by the trumpet of the word; he sees and feels that he is in the utmost distress, environed with dangers, and can at present see no way of

escape opened. Luke xv. 17. He is in the case of the afflicted, pursued Israelites at the Red Sea. Ex. xiv. 14, 15. This is that spirit of bondage to fear, which ordinarily precedes the spirit of adoption. Rom. viii. 15.

3. Compunction, or sharp anguish for sin. The sight of sin and wrath wounds the soul, as though it were stabbed with a sword. Acts ii. 37. They have such acute pains as if a sharp spear lanced their hearts. It is elsewhere called the "rending of the heart." Joel ii. 14. When we are greatly grieved in soul for sin, so that it even cuts us to the heart to think how we have dishonoured God, and disparaged ourselves by it; when we conceive an aversion to sin, and earnestly desire and endeavour to get clear of the principles of it, and never to return to the practice of it, then we rend our hearts for it, and then will God rend the heavens, and come down to us with mercy. Also, this compunction I am treating of is called breaking up of the fallow ground. "Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns;" (Jer. iv. 3,) which represents both the necessity and difficulty of it. "An unconvinced heart," says one, "is like fallow ground, untilled, unfenced, unfruitful of any thing besides thorns, which is the natural produce of the soil; which we are bound to get ploughed up by the word of God, (Heb. iv. 12,) otherwise they will choke our attempts, and blast our hopes." Hos. x. 11. It is also compared to a taking away the fore-skin of the heart. "Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the fore-skins of your heart, ye men of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire, and

burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings;" (Jer. iv. 4;) *i. e.*, saith Mr. Poole, "take away that brawniness and obstinacy that is upon your hearts, having to do with God that hath respect unto the heart, (Deut. x. 16. Ezek. xliv. 9. Acts vii. 51,) lest you proceed so far in your obstinacy, that I will not be appeased." Jer. xxi. 12. Amos v. 6.

4. *Enquiry.* When the apostle Peter's preaching, accompanied with divine energy, had wounded the Jews, this was the necessary effect of it, "What shall we do?" Acts ii. 37.

Thus I thought it necessary, to prevent mistakes, to speak first of that which is previous and preparatory to this change. Now I come to speak somewhat briefly of the change itself in the several faculties of man's soul. And

1. The understanding is renewed in its several powers or acts; a light from on high shines into it, whereby its natural darkness is in some measure dissipated, so that it hath new apprehensions of things. As natural light was one of the first things produced in the old creation, "And God said, Let there be light, and there was light;" (Gen. i. 3;) so spiritual light is one of the first in the new. 2 Cor. iv. 6. Formerly, the face of Christ was veiled from the soul, as the face of Moses from the Israelites; but now he sees something of his peerless beauty, and transcendent excellency. Christ is to him as the apple tree among the trees of the woods, as the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valley. Cant. ii. 1—3. His very name is as fragrant ointment poured

forth, and aromatic spices. Cant. i. 3. All other enjoyments are as dross in comparison of him, in the enlightened sinner's esteem. Phil. iii. 8. Now he sees the loathsome and abominable nature of sin. Rom. vii. 13. Now he sees, and experience tells him, that there is no true solace, contentment, or satisfaction to be had in any sublunary trifles; he sees that such earthly enjoyments are empty of solid good, transient, unsatisfying, and bewitching; contrary to his former apprehension. Isa. lv. 2. 1 Cor. vii. 31. Psa. vi. 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. They can find no more nourishment in them for their hungering souls, than a starving man would do in gravel-stones, wind, husks, ashes. Prov. xx. 17. Hos. xii. 1. Luke xv. 16. Isa. xliv. 20. That heart-holiness, and circumspection of life, which he was apt formerly to ridicule and deride, as needless preciseness, affected and foolish singularity, (Cant. v. 9. 1 Pet. iv. 4,) he sees not only necessary, but desirable and lovely. Cant. vi. 1. Zech. viii. 23. Mal. iii. 16, 17. Now he sees clearly that that good heart, those good words, good deeds, good meanings, for which he thought God would spare and reward him, deserve nothing less than the revengeful strokes of God's direful justice. Isa. lxiv. 6. Phil. iii. 7.

2. He has a new assent, his understanding being enlightened to perceive the precious truths of Christ; he assents to them with a kind of plerophory, in a lively, sensible manner. Luke i. 1. His assent is not grounded upon opinion, conjecture, or historical credit, as formerly; and therefore, is not light and superficial, but firm and real. The natural atheism of his heart is in some measure cured,

so that he does not so staggeringly assent to divine truths as before.

3. His judgment is changed. Formerly it was an absurd paradox to him, if he had all the honours, profits, and pleasures his heart could desire, that he should not be happy then; but now he judges by experience, that these things can no more satisfy an enlightened soul, than an adamant stone, or a puff of wind, would satisfy a hungry person. Formerly he used to think that the new birth was but a fancy, a whim, a fiction, introduced by some hypocondriac, silly, precise people, that imposed upon themselves and others, with dreams and notions, the effects of melancholy blood, a sickly constitution, or a disordered brain; but now he sees and feels an absolute necessity of it, and that he must be damned unless he obtains it, according to the solemn, redoubled asseveration of the Lord Christ, in our text. In short, he used to judge of things by their appearance, but now he judges of them according to what they are in reality.

4. His estimate of things is changed. He was wont to think highly of the world and the things of it, however contrarily he might speak, these had the throne of his heart; but now he prefers even the reproach of Christ before them. Heb. xi. 26. Thus his estimate is changed in respect of honours, pleasures, companions, gifts, parts, privileges, performances, which would take up more time than can be well spared at present to explain and illustrate. I proceed therefore to another particular.

5. His purposes are changed, he has vastly different

designs from those he was wont to entertain and indulge before his new birth. While he was in a state of security, his principal scope was to get the world, if possible; to this end, he would be frequently, almost continually, framing the most artful and suitable schemes, and if these did not answer as he would have them, then perhaps his sleep would be broken, and his thoughts disturbed, and he put upon a rack of impatient pain. In short, his purposes were for sin and self, but now they are for God and his soul, now he strives as much daily to get his heart and affections deadened to the world, as he did before to secure and advance his interest in it. Now his anxious mind is often contriving, what measures he should take to glorify the blessed God, to subdue abominable sin, and advance the despised interest of his dear Lord Jesus.

6. His reasonings are changed. He was wont in his state of sin and security, to argue for sin and the world, against Christ and holiness; from the mercy and goodness of God, to liberty (so called, but it is really the basest bondage), in sinning against him, but now it is the greatest motive to holiness, and circumspection.

7. The will is changed. It has got a new bias and centre of its actings; in his unconverted state, himself or the world was the centre, in reality (notwithstanding his fair and false flams and flourishes of empty talk to the contrary), to which he moved, for which he acted with a furious natural proneness. Psa. iv. 6. 2 Tim. iii. 2. But now God in Christ is the centre to which all his actions, whether natural, civil, or sacred, do bend and terminate.

He aims at God's glory in all his actions universally, and singly, the inclinations of his will bend towards God freely from an inward and powerful principle of life. 1 Cor. x. 31. Grace is in him as a well of water springing up to eternal life. John iv. 14. His will has an unconstrained motion. Some, under the views of a vast eternity, or some afflictive dispensation, have weak motions of heart towards God. Psa. lxxviii. 34. But when the prospect of danger is removed, the motions cease, (Psa. lxxviii. 57,) like the motion of a clock when the spring is removed; but the motions of a believer's heart are constant, even when outward enforcements are taken away, (Psa. cxix. 112,) because they flow from an inward and vital cause.

Furthermore, his will has new enjoyments. In his state of unregeneracy, his life was only a vexatious wandering from vanity to vanity; all the contentment he had, was in some worldly accommodations, or outward performances, Psa. xlvi. Amos. vi. 1, 3—6. Rom. x. 3. But now they are as husks to him, he cannot be satisfied without the children's bread. Psa. cxix. 37. & cvi. 4. It was an observable saying of Augustine, "*Tu fecisti cor nostrum, et irrequietum est donec ad te revertatur*," *i. e.*, "Thou hast made our heart, and it is restless till it returns to thee." The sinner in his security would be contented with the husk and shell of duties, but now nothing will satisfy him but the presence of Jesus in them; a sight of the king's face, a sense of his special love. But the cardinal acts of the will are assent and dissent, these are the very hinges upon which it exerts its receptive and exclusive faculties, suitable

to its love or dislike to the object proposed. John i. 12 & v. 40. When Christ is offered to the soul appended to the pole of the gospel, on his own terms of self denial, and taking up the cross, the new-born person is willing to want all, that he may have Him, to lose all, that he may gain Him.

8. The affections of the soul are changed, such as desire, delight, fear, hatred, joy, and love. New-born persons have frequent and vehement desires after communion with, and conformity to, God in Christ here, and the full enjoyment of him hereafter, arising from a sight of his beauty and excellency. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?" Psa. xlii. 1, 2. "My flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory—because thy loving kindness is better than life—my soul followeth hard after thee." Psa. lxiii. 1—3, 8. "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." Psa. lxxxiv. 1, 2. "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine." Cant. i. 2. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." Psa. lxxiii. 25. "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! I have longed for thy salvation, O Lord, and thy law is my delight." Psa. cxix. 5, 174. "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen, even so, come Lord Jesus." Rev.

xxii. 20. And as their desires are after Christ, so their delight is in him. "The king hath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine." Cant. i. 4. "A bundle of myrrh is my well beloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts." Cant. i. 13. "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste." Cant. ii. 3. "His mouth is most sweet; (*i. e.*, the communications of his love by his word are most delightful,) yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem." Cant. v. 16. And as they delight in him, so they fear to offend him, and that even in the least things. 1 Thess. v. 22. They are apt to cry out when they are tempted, as Joseph, "How shall I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Gen. xxxix. 9. They see the baseness and feel the bitterness of sin, and, therefore, fear it. Lam. iii. Having in remembrance the wormwood and the gall, they feel a sense of the divine goodness, and, therefore, fear sinning against it. "Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days." Hos. iii. 5. Rom. ii. 4. And as they fear sin, so they hate it universally and irreconcilably, (Psa. cxix. 104,) and cannot at any time fall in love with it as formerly. 1 John iii. 3—10. Again, the objects of their love are changed. God's people, his laws, his image, his ordinances are the objects to which their affections freely

flow. Now, the new born person loves sincerely and fervently those whom he once despised, and pities those whom he once loved and admired, and disdains their society, their scoffs and threatenings, as well as their destructive gains, and perishing, insipid pleasures. Psa. xv. 4 & cxix. 115. 2 Kings iii. 14. Psa. ii. 1, 4 & lii. 6, 7. Isa. xxxiii. 15. Psa. cxli. 4. Heb. xi. 24. Now he sees that the people of God are the most excellent persons on earth, as much preferable to others as jewels, the stones of a crown, refined gold, a royal diadem, are to common pebbles, dross, and rubbish. Mal. iii. 17. Zech. ix. 16. Lam. iv. 2. Isa. lxii. 3. Psa. xvi. 3. As much excelling others, as wheat does chaff (Matt. xiii. 30. Psa. i. 4); light, darkness (Matt. v. 14. Eph. v. 8); cedars and myrtle trees, the tares and thorns. Psa. xcii. 12. Isa. lv. 13. Matt. xiii. 38. Cant. ii. 2. As much as the most potent kings, the basest slaves. Rev. i. 6. Acts viii. 23. Isa. lxi. 1. As much as lambs and doves are preferable in their qualities to goats, swine, dogs, and foxes (Hos. iv. 14. Matt. x. 16 & xxv. 33 & vii. 6. 2 Pet. ii. 22. Luke xiii. 32); and vipers. Matt. iii. 7. Therefore, the new born person resorts to God's people, covets their company, (which he before shunned,) that with them he may seek Jesus. Acts iv. 23. Cant. i. 7 & vi. 1. When the blinded jailor came to have his eyes opened, he soon washed the wounds he had made before by many and cruel stripes. Acts xvi. 23, 33. Their love is fixed on God in Jesus, as their highest good and last end, as their complete, satisfying and everlasting portion; (Lam. iii. 24. Psa. xvi. 5. & lxxiii. 26); which shows it in lively, warm, vigorous

actings, so that the whole soul feels sometimes the sweet pains, and refreshful qualms of a love-sickness after Christ. Cant. v. 8. All the waters of affliction cannot quench this love, but make it burn more brightly, as oil cast into the fire. "Set me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death." Cant. viii. 6. Their sorrow is also changed as to its objects; they were wont, in their carnal and secure state, to mourn principally about worldly losses and disappointments, (Psa. iv. 6. 2 Cor. vii. 10,) that either they could not amass and obtain, or retain such a quantity of worldly pelf, as their greedy desires longed for; or their trouble principally centred upon the loss of their relations or friends, or their credit and worldly comfort. Gen. xxvii. 38. 1 Sam. xv. 30. But now they mourn chiefly over their sins against God, (Psa. li. 4,) that they are so many, so heinous, that they have continued in sin so long; (Rom. vi. 21); that they are so inwardly and universally corrupted by it; (Rom. vii. 24); and they do not only grieve that they themselves have sinned against such a good God, but that others, also, do grievously reproach the Almighty, and affront his majesty, by contemning his authority, profaning his sacred name, violating his sabbath, slighting his word and ordinances, opposing his truths, and abusing his people. Ezek. ix. 4. 2 Pet. ii. 7, 8. Psa. cxix. 136. Lam. iv. 2. They also mourn an absent God! The withdrawing of his comfortable presence from them distresses their spirits. Psa. xlii. 5. Cant. iii. 1—3. & v. 6, 8. The numerous crowds of wicked people, the smallness of the number of

those that are truly godly, and the little success of the gospel of Christ, affords matter of great sorrow to new born persons. Matt. vii. 13 & xx. 16 & xxii. 14. Nahum vii. 1, 2. Psa. iii. 1. Isa. liii. 1.

9. The conscience is changed. As before it was not able to perform its offices, or functions, viz: to apply, convince, or tremble at the word, but now, when the soul feels the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit, what a tender sense fills the renewed conscience! For what small things will it smite, rebuke and check the sinner! How strongly will it bind to duty, and bar against sin! The consciences of the most of ungodly people are large, secure, and mostly silent; if it be not when they commit gross and notorious crimes. Tit. i. 15. But the consciences of regenerate persons, being purged from dead works, (Heb. ix. 14,) do wake and rebuke sharply for small offences, (1 Sam. xxiv. 5,) and put the sinner into distress and anguish. Gen. xliii. 21. Now it is the continued labour of the new born person to get and keep a good conscience. 2 Cor. i. 12. Acts xxiv. 16.

10. The memory; now it is more apt to embrace and retain divine things than formerly. Cant. i. 4. Psa. ciii. 18 & cxix. 11. The regenerate person endeavours to lay up the sayings of Jesus in the cabinet of his memory. Matt. xxvi. 75. I confess that regenerating grace does not change the natural imperfections of the human constitution, only the moral. If a person has naturally a weak memory, it cannot be reasonably expected that grace will strengthen the natural faculty, for its design is not to heal

the body but the soul, it only turns the vein of the thoughts and affections on divine subjects, and helps to perceive better, fundamental truths, (1 John ii. 20, 27,) and makes a person the more desirous to retain them, but it does not enlarge or strengthen the faculty itself ordinarily; a person may be a strong Christian, have an affectionate heart, and a holy humble practice, and yet have but a weak memory; but, in the meantime, it is surely the practice of new-born persons to pore much upon divine things. Psa. i. 2 & civ. 34 & cxix. 97, 99. Therefore when they forget precious truths they have heard explained, (their affections being fixed upon them,) they are grieved. But

11. Their conversation is changed. They were wont to be like moles grovelling in the earth, now their mind and conversation are in heaven; Phil. iii. 20. Heb. xiii. 14; they are ashamed and blush at their former conversation. Rom. vi. 21. They have changed their former masters, sin, Satan, and the world, and broken their detestable league with them and death. Rom. vi. 14, 16—23. Isa. xxviii. 15, 18. "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts." Gal. v. 24. The new born person maintains a continual conflict with sin. Gal. v. 17. Rom. vii. 23. Now he does not only endeavour to restrain the outward act, but to crucify the root of his inward corruption. Psa. li. Not only to cut off some branches, but all; even that sin which has the strongest seat in his constitution. Psa. xviii. 23. He endeavours to repress the first motions of sin, and to flee the appearance of evil, being diffident of his own strength, and afraid to offend his God. 1 Thess. v. 22.

But I proceed to the third thing proposed.

III. To offer reasons urging the necessity of regeneration. And

1. The universal corruption of our nature shows the indispensable necessity of renewing grace, as in the sixth verse of our context. "For without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Heb. xii. 14. Rom. viii. 13. Is it reasonable to suppose that such a holy God as Jehovah is, who cannot look on sin but with abhorrence, should receive such polluted wretches as unconverted sinners are, into his complacential embraces?

2. Because while unconverted the law condemns us; Gal. iii. 10. Rom. iii. 19; which sentence cannot be removed any other ways but by faith in Christ (Mark xvi. 16. John iii. 18), which no unconverted person has; for if he had, it would change his heart and practice. Gal. v. 6. 2 Thess. i. 11. James ii. 14. He may, indeed, have a historical or temporary faith, but that will not do for salvation. James ii. 19, 20.

3. Because of the stability and firmness of God's word. He who cannot lie hath spoken it, and heaven and earth may, and shall pass away, but not one tittle that God hath spoken, shall pass away unaccomplished. Matt. xxiv. 35. Therefore regeneration is necessary to salvation.

4. The consideration of the nature of the happiness of heaven, with the respect that regeneration hath to it, plainly manifests the necessity of it. Surely the nature of future happiness is pure and spiritual, consisting in the vision and fruition of a holy God, who is a Spirit, (1 Cor.

xiii. 12,) and in the society and social worship of saints and angels, and such pleasures and employments as the beauty of the objects and other circumstances of the place, may be supposed to imply. Now what suitableness is there between a carnal, unrenewed mind, and the spiritual and pure pleasures of heaven? Does not pleasure spring from the suitableness between the object and the faculty? What pleasure then can be expected by the unregenerate in heaven itself, if they were carried there in their present condition (though they may be sure, in the meantime, that while such, they will never have the trial. Rev. xxi. 27 & xxii. 15)? There is such a discord between their present dispositions and the temper, and entertainments, and employments of heaven, for these are holy and spiritual, but they are carnal and sensual. This Dr. Scott expresses beautifully, "For alas (if we consider the matter rightly), how could souls of their relish and complexion find a proper employment for themselves in the regions of bliss? There are no wanton amours among those heavenly lovers; no rivers of wine, among their rivers of pleasure, to gratify their boundless sensuality; no parasite to flatter their lofty pride; no miseries to feed their meagre envy; no mischiefs to tickle their devilish revenge; but all the felicities with which that state abounds (viz: praise, love, contemplation), are such that they would loath and nauseate them, as too pure and refined for their depraved appetites; and not improbably (if they had their own option), desire to fly to hell for shelter, to spirits of their own depravity, rather than stay to be tormented in a heaven so incongruous to

their nature." So that if these men would be happy, they must either find out a new heaven, or get new hearts.

Bishop Beveridge expresses himself thus upon this head: "Supposing it should please God to take us all up immediately into the highest heavens, and there place us around our blessed Saviour; all such as are real saints among us, as love God above all things, and have prepared their minds for spiritual enjoyments, how glad would they be to see their Redeemer, shining in all his glory! How suddenly would they strike up with the choir of heaven, in singing the praises of Him that brought them thither! What infinite pleasure would they take in the place, employment, company, and every thing they see there! But as for others who are still in their sins, and mind only earthly things, how sad and disconsolate would they be! They would wonder to see the saints so pleasant and joyful; for, as for their parts, they would see nothing there to take delight in; in the midst of light they would be still in darkness, and in sorrow in the midst of joys, they would not hear the heavenly music, or if they did, it would sound harsh, and be all discords to them; they could not taste these spiritual dainties, or if they did, they could not relish or find any sweetness in them; they could not see the face of God, or if they did, they would not be pleased, but terrified and confounded at it; and all this for the want of a true principle of grace and holiness, without which a blind man may as well delight in pictures, the deaf man in music, or a brute beast in metaphysics, as men of such tempers either in heaven, or God himself."

Again, regeneration hath such a relation to our salvation, that it is indeed a part and beginning of it. *Gratia est aurora gloriæ*, grace is the very dawn of glory, differing only in degree and duration from the happiness of heaven. "The truth is," saith Stanhope, "God in his wisdom hath so ordered the matter, so admirably contrived our nature and our duty, that virtue and happiness, grace and glory, are one and the same thing, differing only in the circumstances and several prospects we view them under. The good man begins his heaven upon earth, and finishes there what is imperfect here; for the more he masters his sensual appetites, and gets above the world, the more he is spiritualized, and made meet to be a partaker with the saints in light."

Pray consider seriously that precious, but awful place of holy scripture, Gal. vi. 15. It is observable here, that the apostle was speaking of some who desired to make a fair show in the flesh, and, therefore, urged the necessity of circumcision, whom the apostle informed and assured that in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availed anything, *i. e.*, to salvation, but the new creature. Circumcision was certainly an ordinance of God's own appointment, a seal of the covenant between God and his people, (Rom. iv. 11,) a badge of distinction between them and the infidel nations, (Rom. iii. 2,) a sign of their original pravity, and of the necessity of inward sanctity. Jer. iv. 4. Col. ii. 13. Yet the apostle informs those who thought they were bound to observe it, that without an internal change, these supposed privileges

would avail nothing, and by a parity of reason, (as Dr. Edwards justly observes,) "he must be interpreted to speak to us, that our sacramental washing in baptism, our spiritual gifts and endowments, our profound knowledge and learning, our observation of the ordinances of Christ, and our outward acts of religious worship, will all avail us nothing, unless we have a new principle implanted in us, such as influences our lives and produces evangelical obedience." But I proceed to the

IVth thing proposed, which was to improve the doctrine. And

Use 1. It informs us that the way to be made a member of the invisible church is by regeneration; "For there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." Rev. xxi. 27.

2. It informs us of the love of God in revealing that way to us (Hos. viii. 12); which should strike our admiration and awake our gratitude.

3. It informs us of the love of Christ in purchasing, after such a painful manner, that life for his people, to which this way leads. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." 2 Cor. viii. 9. "Who hath abolished death and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." 2 Tim. i. 10. That having your affections dead to, and weaned from, all enjoyments here, "your life may be hid with Christ in

God; that when he who is your life appears, you may appear with him." Col. iii. 4.

4. It informs us of the emptiness and insufficiency of all outward and legal performances to obtain an actual interest in the purchased happiness, without good principles of action, such as a new heart, and transcendent love to the divine majesty. "For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit: neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." Luke vi. 43. Therefore, according to the words of Jesus, "If you would have the fruit good, you must make the tree good." Matt. xii. 33. For God is a Spirit, and, therefore, will not accept of, or be pleased with, any worship but that which is agreeable to his nature. John iv. 24.

Use 2. Of examination. Now that you may know your present state and condition, I shall propose some characters of regeneration.

Now, the first property of regeneration is divine life. As natural life is the natural product of generation, so is a spiritual life, of regeneration. Gal. ii. 20. 2 Cor. iv. 10. Now, this divine life has these following properties, by which it may be known, analogous or agreeable to the properties of a natural life.

1. Food. Without this a natural life would soon expire. Psa. civ. 29. Thus it is with the spiritual, "As new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word." 1 Pet. ii. 2. Some render the original words (*logicon gala*) rational milk, such as is fit for the nourishment, not of the body, but of the mind. A true convert desires the sincere milk,

the pure word of God, not blended or diluted with adulterating, depraving, and debasing mixtures. It is the natural property of every kind of life to desire food suited to its nature, without which it cannot subsist. Now, as the natural man chiefly longs after the enjoyments of this world, (Psa. iv. 6,) so does the new born person after heavenly enjoyments. Col. iii. 1.

2. Sense. As a natural life feels what opposeth it, grapples with its enemy, and if stronger, proves victorious, so it is eminently in the divine life, which having such supernatural assistances, proves too hard for its opponents. Gal. v. 17. 1 John v. 4, 18 & iii. 9.

3. Growth. It is natural for children to grow fast, if some uncommon accident does not prevent it, and that not in the head only, for indeed such are distempered with the rickets, but in all other parts proportionally; so do babes in Christ grow fast, if not distempered (2 Thess. i. 3), and that not only in knowledge, but in faith, love, holiness. 2 Pet. iii. 18. "When I was a child I spake as a child, I thought as a child, when I became a man, I put away childish things." 1 Cor. xiii. 11. So it is with a growing Christian, he puts away childish things; and this among the rest, viz: entertaining a fond imagination, that he shall be always dandled on his Father's knee, or in his Lord's lap, or always embraced in his Husband's arms: when he was but a babe in Jesus, he was apt to conclude his Father had quite abandoned him, if he lost sight of his face but for a little; if he wanted the sweet sense of his love he was peevish and dejected; but now he knows

better, that he is not to live by sense but by faith. Gal. ii. 20. Though he retains still an earnest desire after communion with God, yet it is more discreet, believing and submissive; and when they cannot perceive any growth in themselves after some time, they grieve and mourn. A child of God not only weeps at its birth but afterwards. Mr. Burkett has a very good observation upon this: "that as natural children come crying into the world, so no spiritual child is still-born," or born dumb. Acts ix. 11. We may justly reckon those graceless and unrenewed persons, who do not earnestly long and labour after growth, or mourn not for their little proficiency. Heb. vi. 1. Phil. iii. 14. They that are contented with stinted measures of supposed grace, in reality have no saving grace at all. 1 Cor. xv. 8. Eph. iii. 18.

4. Motion. This is an inseparable property of a natural life. Acts xvii. 28. When we see any thing stand stock still for a considerable time without the least motion, we know it is dead; *e. g.*, when we observe a statue void of motion, with its eyes fixed for some space of time, we are soon convinced, for all its fair face, that it has no life; so when we behold professors of Christianity having but an empty form, without the powerful and progressive practice of piety, (2 Tim. iii. 5,) may not we judge them, and should not they judge themselves to be (notwithstanding of their fair pretences) dead idols in a spiritual sense, void of the life of Jesus?

5. A generative faculty, when grown to maturity: so those that have a divine life labour to communicate it to

others. John iv. 28, 29. Luke xxii. 32. Here we may apply justly that of the poet: *Nascitur indigne, per quem non nascitur alter.* "He is unworthy of life himself, who is not the cause of it to another."

6. Likeness. The father begets a son in his own likeness; so did the first Adam, (Gen. v. 3,) and so does the second. John iii. 6. The image of the first is of the earth earthy. 1 Cor. xv. 47—49. "For that which is born of the flesh is flesh;" (John iii. 6;) *i. e.*, exceedingly corrupt and sinful; not only fleshly but flesh; abstracts denote great degrees of what is spoken. Eph. v. 8. Man, by a sinful indulgence of his appetite, (Gen. iii. 6,) prostituted the dominion of his soul to the tyranny of sense; so that now before conversion he is quite sunk in sensuality; instead of deserving the honourable character of a living soul as formerly, (Gen. ii. 7,) he now incurs that just, but sarcastical one of flesh! His reason and all his noble powers are so degraded, unhinged and corrupted; he acts with such indifferency about eternal, and with such vigour about temporal things, as if he had no soul, but was wholly flesh: a mere master-beast. But the image of the second Adam is heavenly and spiritual. 1 Cor. xv. 47—49. "For that which is born of the Spirit is spirit;" (John iii. 6;) *i. e.*, his soul has recovered its just, though lost, empire over the senses and brutish appetites, and is now guided and governed by the influence and direction of the Holy Spirit. Rom. viii. 1, 4. As the natural parent communicates of his nature to the child, so those that are born of God are said to partake of the divine nature; (2 Pet. i. 4;) *i. e.*, they have a certain resemblance

of the moral, communicable perfections of the Deity, wrought in them: "They are holy as he is holy." 1 Pet. i. 15, 16. "Merciful as their Father is merciful." Luke vi. 36. "Perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect;" (Matt. v. 48;) *i. e.*, they endeavour earnestly after perfection of degrees as well as of parts. Phil. iii. 13, 14. Eph. v. 1, 2. So long as men are contrary to God in their generally prevailing dispositions, and course of action, we may tell them as our Lord the perverse Jews: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." John viii. 44.

7. Love. A child hath a love to his father and brethren, which the law of nature teaches, and the likeness that is between them confirms. He is a very monster in nature that is void of this affection! Thus the new-born Christian hath

1. A predominant love to God in Christ. Psa. lxxv. 25. Matt. x. 37.

2. A permanent love. John xv. 9, 10.

3. A panting, longing love. Psa. lxxxiv. 1, 2.

4. An operative and efficacious love. 2 Cor. v. 14. John xiv. 21. Rom. vi. 4, 5. And so he has a real, effectual, universal, and well grounded affection to the children of God, as his brethren in Christ. His affection does not consist in windy words (1 John iii. 17, 18); neither is his love limited to a party of his own denomination, temper, or sentiments. No, no! that is too narrow a circle for truly Christian love, (such a confined affection is but a natural, selfish, party zeal, which does not deserve the name of love,) which extends itself to all that carry the image of the holy

God, and speak in the language of Canaan, of whatever nation they be, or denomination they bear; and as he loves all Christians for what of God he sees in them, so consequently his affection is carried forth with a greater degree of ardour towards such as excel others in holiness, humility, and circumspection; and that not with a fearful but complacential respect. Psa. xvi. 3. 1 John iv. 8. The

8th Character is that change of the practice which I described in the doctrinal part of this discourse; which I think is rather an effect of the new birth than a part of it. It is observable that, in every generation, there is a great change in the old creation, to which this work of God is for many and weighty reasons compared. Eph. ii. 10. There was an admirable alteration, when the present most beautiful and regular system of things was produced by the agency of the infinite Spirit of God (who moved upon the face of the waters), out of the former disorder, dark mass, and confused chaos. So is there not an admirable change, when a profane, ignorant, sottish creature is turned into a sober, holy, heavenly Christian? "Give me," says Lactantius, "a man as profane and abusive, as lewd and lascivious, as can be imagined, and with a few instructions of God, I will make him as meek and innocent as a lamb. Could ever any of the philosophers do this?" Lib. 2. In short, such a change deserves our admiration more than if a clod of earth were turned into a star of heaven. This is no less a change than from darkness to light, from death to life. Eph. v. 8.

And now, brethren, I pray you, for Christ's sake,

examine yourselves, whether you have had the experience of these things; it is easy to be mistaken in this matter, and a mistake is dangerous. Jer. xvii. 9. Prov. xiv. 12. I shall propose a few questions to your consciences, from what I have been treating of, and I beg you would answer them impartially as in the presence of God. And

Quest. 1. Has sin been discovered, and applied to your consciences with power, both in respect of its vile nature, and dreadful effects, by the law of God, and the Spirit of God, as I before described?

Q. 2. Have you been made to see your lost and deplorable state by nature, so as to be exceedingly distressed, and put to a soul-afflicting plunge and loss, about obtaining deliverance out of it, and shut up to Christ as the only door of hope? Acts ii. 37 & xiv. 27. John x. 7.

Q. 3. Hast thou, O sinner, been made to inquire after, and seek for relief, with anguish of soul? Acts ix.

Q. 4. Has the Lord Jesus been discovered by his word and Spirit to your inquiring, burdened, anxious soul, in his mediatorial excellency and sufficiency? Matt. xi. 21. Gal. i. 16.

Q. 5. And have you, with deliberation and resolution, unreservedly closed with the offered Redeemer, upon the terms of discipleship he has specified, viz: of taking up his cross, denying yourselves and following him? John i. 12. Luke ix. 23 & xiv. 26. That is, have you been, and are you willing, and heartily resolved, to quit freely and cheerfully your dearest natural and civil interests, your friends, relations, estates, lives, liberties, respectively, if

called to it, for the defence of truth, and readily embrace shame, solitude, poverty and death? Are you willing also to abandon your own righteousness, all your religious performances in point of dependence, and absolutely, immediately, and freely, forsake all your darling lusts, and embrace strict holiness? What sayest thou, sinner? How is it with thee in these respects, willing or not? What! does that man say, It is hard—I cannot now? Wretched soul! As the Lord lives, thou art a dead man.

Q. 6. Are old things passed away? 2 Cor. v. 17. As particularly,

1. Is thy old blindness removed? 1 Pet. i. 4.

2. Thy old security disturbed? Luke xi. 21.

3. Thy old hope sapped at the foundation? Rom. vii. 9.

4. Thy old enmity against God's people subdued? Cant. vi. 1.

5. Thy old, carnal, worldly thoughts, affections and practice altered, or are they still as they were? Why then, I may say to thee, as the apostle Peter to Simon Magus, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. I perceive thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." Acts. viii. 21, 23.

Q. 7. Are all things made new? 2 Cor. v. 17. As particularly,

1. Hast thou that new light in the understanding? Acts xxvi. 18.

2. That pliableness in the will? Psa. cx. 3. Acts ix. 6.

3. That proneness in the affections Godward and heavenward, which I before described? Col. iii. 2.

4. That tenderness of conscience?

5. That tenaciousness of memory respecting divine things? Psa. cxix. 98.

6. That reformation in practice, which was before described?

Q. 8. Have you had that life of God, that likeness to God, that love for God and his people, which was before spoken of?

Q. 9. Is your obedience evangelical, universal, continual?

But I proceed to

Use 3. which is of conviction and terror to those that are not born again; but who are they, and what may afford them necessary terror?

1. More generally, you are they who cannot, with a good conscience, say yea in answer to the nine questions I proposed before. But, more particularly,

1. May persons make a strict profession of piety, and be admitted to, and enjoy religious privileges, and so pass for Christians, and yet be unconverted? How far, then, are you from this blessed change, who even scorn to profess Christ and piety, who disdain and disclaim the very name saint, as a term of reproach, a badge of dishonour, and grin and show your teeth (silly souls!) when the very word is but mentioned in your hearing? Remember, for this you shall gnash your teeth in hell, except ye repent. I suppose you think to be saved without the new birth, in a way of your own contrivance, (O blind moles!) ay, but then, the devil, your dear father, and your brethren, the

sons of Belial, the whole crew of profane, unclean rebels and venomous vermin the burdened earth now bears, or hell contains, must be saved along with you, and a pretty company you would make all together, would you not? A fine heaven, indeed! How can you expect that Christ will own you hereafter, when you will not own him here?

2. May people be convinced of sin, and of their lost and deplorable condition because of sin, so as to be in great distress about it, without being new born? Alas, then! What will become of you who are yet secure and asleep in sin?

3. May persons be restrained from gross impieties and yet be in a state of death, estranged from this divine birth? Oh! what will then become of you who give a loose to profaneness, swearing, sabbath-breaking, drunkenness, uncleanness, fraud, and the derision of what is good? Are not burnings, burnings from God, burnings hotter than Sodom's flame, likely to be your portion?

4. May persons attain the form of piety, and be externally regular in the performance of all religious duties, and yet not be new born? Then, wretched sinners! how far are you from this divine birth, who profane God's name, slight his word and ordinances by neglecting to attend upon the one, and to seek preparation for the other, who, as fearlessly as profanely, violate his holy sabbaths, and neglect many positive duties of religion? Read that passage of God's word, and blush and tremble. Matt. v. 20.

5. May people have great gifts and good motions, and

want this new birth I have been treating upon? Then what will become of you, ignorant souls, especially such of you as are willingly ignorant? how far are you from a sound conversion to God, which begins in light and knowledge! 1 Cor. iv. 6. And how far will you be at last from obtaining that inheritance conversion qualifies persons for? Isa. xxvii. 11. 2 Thess. i. 7, 8.

6. May persons have a partial alteration upon some or all the powers of their souls, and be almost persuaded to be real Christians, and yet be void of the new birth? What will become of you, hardened wretches, every of whose faculties is perhaps altered for the worse, whose necks are as an iron sinew, and whose brow is brass? Pharisees, heathens and devils outdo you in what is good. The Pharisees in most or in all the outward duties of religion. Phil. iii. The heathens in their morality (perhaps), *e. g.*, the Turks or some of them, have had a greater concern about their souls than thou hast. Remember trembling Felix, and be ashamed of thy horrible stupidity! Yea, the very devils tremble, and yet thou art senseless! O man! Is thy breast adamant, or thy bowels iron, that thou thus slightest the terrors of the Almighty, which set themselves in battle array against thee? Canst thou imagine that thou art new born, or shalt be saved in this condition? No, no: be not deceived, the devil himself would find as easy an admission into heaven as thou in thy present condition, as our text demonstrates.

7. May persons have a zeal for religion as Jehu and others, and yet be unconverted? Oh then! What will become of

you, lifeless, listless, careless Gallios in religious affairs, who do not care a straw whether religion prospers or not? If you can but get worldly prosperity, if you can but with Gehazi get the changes of raiment, with Judas carry the bag, or with cursed Achan get the wedges of gold, you care not, perhaps, though for it you should betray Christ's cause, and bring judgments upon others. But will not such lukewarm, selfish wretches be spued out of Christ's mouth? Rev. iii. 16. How far are ye, poor souls, from this divine birth?

8. May unconverted persons come so far as to love God's people, associate with them, and delight in hearing of God's word, and attending upon his ordinances? How far then are those from regeneration, or the way to it, who do not come half so far as hypocrites in this? Instead of associating with God's people, they carefully avoid their company, deride them, and spitefully abuse them, and most contemptuously neglect opportunities of hearing God's word, instead of delighting in it, and that, forsooth, because the preacher will not be false to God and souls, and preach smooth things according to their fancy. Will not Herod, that heard John the Baptist gladly, rise up in judgment at last, and condemn the haughty and contemptuous wretches of this generation?

9. May persons be brought to mourn for sin with bitterness and anguish, and yet be strangers to the new birth, as Ahab and Judas? How far, then, are those monsters in nature from conversion, who, instead of mourning for their impieties, boast of them, and so glory in their shame?

But what are the miseries of those and all other kinds of unconverted sinners?

Ans. 1. Ye are blind men. Acts xxvi. 18. Ye see not the beauty of holiness, of Christ and heaven, otherwise ye would not live as ye do. John iv. 10.

2. Poor men, however you swell and strut in worldly wealth and grandeur. Rev. iii. 17.

3. Mad men, Psalm xiv. 1, compared with x. 1. Luke xv. 17. You act like distracted men in preferring sin to holiness, perishing, sensual gratifications to the pure, sinless, and everlasting delights that are at God's right hand. Do you not act like fools in preferring your lusts to God and Christ—your worldly gain, which lasts but for a moment, to an immortal crown of life? And does not your folly and madness eminently appear in your daring to affront such a sovereign, infinite Majesty, whom you can neither overcome, deceive nor avoid, whose loving-kindness is better than life, but whose anger is worse than death, and you will find it so in a little time, when you shall wish for death as a sanctuary from it, but shall not obtain your desire?

4. Dead men, wholly void of divine life. Eph. ii. 1.

5. Darkened men, or men under the power of darkness. Eph. v. 8. Col. i. 13. By which metaphor the Scriptures express all kinds of misery. Psa. xxiii. 4. Matt. xxii. 13. Isa. l. 10.

6. Possessed men, under the power and government, and in the possession, of the devil, his slaves, his vassals. Luke xi. 21. 1 John iii. 8, 10. 2 Tim. ii. 26.

7. You are cursed men, cursed by the God that made

you, which none can revoke but himself, and who has declared he will not unless ye repent. Gal. iii. 10. Luke xiii. 3.

8. You are condemned men. John iii. 18.

9. Guilty men. Mark iv. 12. And remember, God has said he will "by no means clear the guilty." Num. xiv. 18.

10. You are bereaved men, secluded from, and bereaved of, all the notices and sweet intimations of God's peculiar favour and friendship, in this world or the next. You are without God in the world, and what can be worse than this? Eph. ii. 12. And as you are justly deprived of his love, so you are continually exposed to his wrath. John iii. 36. You are the very children of the devil by imitation and possession, the seed of the serpent. Gen. iii. 13. 1 John iii. 9, 10. John viii. 44.

11. Miserable men; you are not only void of true light, life, comfort in this world, but of any interest in the inheritance of God's chosen in the next, as our text asserts, and are entitled to a very contrary portion. Eph. ii. 3.

12. Murdering men, cruel murderers, self-murderers, soul-murderers. Ezek. xviii. 31, 32 & xxxiii. 11.

13. Inexcusable men; your eternal damnation is but the natural and necessary fruits of your own wickedness and obstinacy, in rejecting, against your own souls, God's repeated warnings and invitations; and therefore it is but justice, and that not owing to any rigorous severity of God, but entirely to your own cruelty and barbarity, against yourselves, that you should perish. Hos. xiii. 9.

Acts xiii. 46. And this you will be forced to own at last to God's honour, and your own shame. Matt. xxii. 11, 12. For you have slighted the remedy provided with infinite cost for sin; this will make your sin inexcusable, your damnation unavoidable, and yourselves unworthy of pity, because your misery is a voluntary misery, but the fruits of your own choice. Psa. xcv. 8, 11. Matt. xxii. 3, 5 & xxviii. 37. Prov. xxix. 1. What unspeakable pain will your reflections upon these things cause in your consciences to eternity! Mark ix. 44. Isa. lxvi. 24. Oh! think of these things and apply them to heart before it is too late, and never rest until you get converting grace.

ROBERT SMITH, D. D.

The Rev. Robert Smith was born in Ireland, and was descended from a Scottish family which had taken refuge in that country, and had settled in Londonderry. About the year 1730, his parents emigrated to North America, and brought their son Robert, then a child, with them. His ancestors, both by his father's and mother's side, were substantial farmers, and had for several generations been distinguished for a vein of good sense, and for prudent deportment, and, what is better still, for fervent piety.

The residence of Dr. Smith's parents was on the head waters of the Brandywine, about forty miles from the city of Philadelphia, where he was brought up in the pursuit of agriculture. At the age of fifteen or sixteen, he became a subject of divine grace, under the preaching of Mr. Whitefield, who spent some time in his father's neighbourhood on his first visit to America. As soon as young Mr. Smith had experienced the power of religion in his own soul, he felt a strong desire to become a preacher, that he might make known the precious truths of the gospel to his fellow men. In this desire, his pious parents readily concurred, and with their permission, he placed himself under the tuition of the Rev. Samuel Blair, at his school in Faggs Manor. Here, for several years, he pursued his classical, and then his theological studies.

In the year 1750, he was licensed to preach the gospel, and was married to a younger sister of his venerated preceptor. In the year 1751, the next after his licensure, he was ordained and installed pastor of the Presbyterian church in Pequea, in the county of Lancaster, Pa., in which situation he continued to labour faithfully to the time of his death. He was ordained by the Presbytery of New Castle, within the jurisdiction of which his church lay.

In the year 1784, Mr. Smith received from the College of New Jersey the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity, and seldom has that degree been more judiciously conferred; for Mr. Smith was a sound and well-informed theologian, of which he gave evidence in several productions of his pen. He also excelled as a preacher. His discourses were instructive, evangelical, and deeply impressive.

Shortly after his settlement at Pequea, Mr. Smith established a school, with a special view to the gospel ministry, where the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages were taught. In this school, Mr. Smith was assisted by respectable and able teachers; and a large number of young men were here prepared for entering the ministry, before any college existed within the limits of the Presbyterian church; and after the erection of the College of New Jersey at Princeton, young men were fitted to enter that institution, of which Dr. Smith was one of the early and zealous friends.

Beloved and esteemed by all who knew him, he was held in high estimation through a large extent of country, and was looked up to as a father by the churches in Pennsylvania and the neighbouring states. In the year 1790, he was chosen the moderator of the General Assembly; and in 1791, was again a member, and preached before that body at its opening, with uncommon ardour and elevation of mind.

The last public act of his life, was that of attending a meeting of the trustees of the College of New Jersey, at the distance of a hundred miles from home. At this time his bodily health was much reduced, and the effect of this fatiguing journey was to exhaust and debilitate him exceedingly. When he had nearly reached his home,

he found it necessary to call at the house of a friend to obtain a little rest and refreshment. He met the family with his wonted benignity and affection, and requested the opportunity of retiring for a short time to a private chamber; and there in a few minutes, without a struggle or a groan, "he calmly and sweetly breathed out his soul;" and the same smile, with which he entered this friend's house, seemed to be imprinted on his countenance after death. He died in the 63d year of his age.

THE PRINCIPLE OF SIN AND HOLINESS.

BY THE REV. ROBERT SMITH, D. D.

"But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."—ROM. vii. 23.

THE gracious heart is a seat of conflict, the greatest, and most important! a conflict between the flesh and the spirit. Nor does the highest degree of grace raise its subject above the necessity of engaging in this debate. A pregnant instance of this we find in the eminently holy apostle Paul, who, after all his advancement in the spiritual life, "sees a law in his members warring against the law of his mind."

In this engagement, we may, first, observe the combatants, viz: "the law of the members, and the law of the mind;" *i. e.*, grace, and indwelling sin,* which

* That the apostle does not speak in this passage of the operations of the soul before its conversion, as some suppose, and that, therefore, the opponents in this debate are sin and holiness, and not conscience and reason *only* contending with depraved appetites and passions, will plainly appear by consulting the context, where he speaks in the strongest

mutually engage each other, and warmly contend for victory. These have displayed their banners under their respective sovereigns: Jesus, the Prince of peace, and Satan, the prince of darkness. The generals of the field are, "the beloved lust," which most easily besets us, on the side of sin; and on the side of grace, *faith*, to which, among all the graces, the preeminence is given in the spiritual warfare. And while those opposite principles resist each other, as contending parties of different aims and interests, they respectively operate upon the heart, like laws of different tendencies.*

Secondly, we may take notice of what is sometimes the sad event with respect to the better side, which is overcome so far, that the believer is brought "into captivity to the law of sin." The law of sin is the same as the law of the members, mentioned in the former clause. To be brought into captivity to it, is to be brought under its power. Now, doleful as this event is, there is something in it, which pleads the spiritual soldier's loyalty to his Sovereign; he does not capitulate, or come to terms of agreement with sin; but is overcome, and taken as a reluctant and mourn-

terms of his hatred to sin, and delight in the law of God; characters which can never be predicated of the unregenerate, whose hearts are unyielding enmity against God.

* We have here, as is usual in scripture, an assemblage of metaphors, viz: war, and law, to illustrate the same subject. For such is the sublimity of divine truths, and the imperfection of the things of nature, that no allusion drawn from them, can fully illustrate any one point; therefore a number of these are frequently used, that one may help to supply the deficiency of the other.

ful captive. The engagement often appears dubious, now on one side, now another, seeming to overcome, as Israel and Amalek of old. When Moses let down his hands, Amalek prevailed: Israel prevailed when he held them up. So sin prevails, when Christ withholds the aids of his Spirit; when he grants them, grace prevails. Yet, in general, grace has the ascendency, and shall finally obtain a glorious victory.

A mistake about this warfare proves fatal to many carnal professors, who fondly imagine that they are pious, mistaking the reproaches of a natural conscience for the spiritual conflict: a conflict, of which they never had any experience, and, infatuated with this delusion, they rest secure in a graceless state. On the other hand, their fears that all their debates with sin are only some stings of conscience, and, consequently, that they are yet children of wrath, frequently obstruct both the duty and comfort of the saints. Therefore, that I may afford conviction to the one, and relief to the other, I shall attempt in the following pages to explain:

I. The nature of grace, and show the reasons why it is called a law of the mind.

II. The nature of indwelling sin, and the reasons why it is called the law of the members.

III. The nature of the conflict between these opposite principles, and give some marks by which it may be distinguished from the uneasiness arising in the breasts of unbelievers.

I. I am to explain the nature of grace, and show the reasons why it is called a law of the mind.

Now, grace is a principle of spiritual life infused into the soul by the Holy Ghost. This divine principle receives various denominations in the word of God, as "being born again," "regeneration," "a new heart," "a new creature," "God's workmanship created anew:" all which phrases, with many others, plainly evince, that grace is a new, a spiritual, a holy nature; nay, it is called a "divine nature," (2 Pet. i. 4,) because it is the impress of God's moral glories upon the soul. I shall not enter into the dispute, whether this principle precisely consists in divine light let into the mind, or in a holy affection. I think it is most safe and proper to describe it as consisting of both. For grace is a restoration of what we lost by the fall, viz: of the divine image, consisting in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. Eph. iv. 24. Col. iii. 10. Righteousness is seated in the will, holiness in the affections. The affections are sundry vigorous operations of the will, attended with sensible commotions of the animal spirits. It follows, then, that holiness in the affections is the vigorous operation of righteousness in the will. But the will has a respect to objects as eligible, and the ground of its choice is the apprehended goodness of its objects, by which an affection for them is excited. Love to their objects is, for the same reason, necessarily supposed in the affections. This is evident in all the religious affections. Sorrow for sin is affliction of the mind for wrongs done to a beloved object. The soul's expectation of a future good, undoubtedly, supposeth her love to the object of her hope. Desire is the aspiration of love, and joy in its triumph. On the whole,

it appears, that an affection for divine objects is the very essence of righteousness and holiness; and that this affection, and knowledge, the other part of the divine image, are the very constituents of a gracious principle, or the new nature. On this account grace is called, "the law of God written upon the heart," (Jer. xxxi. 33,) a phrase of equal import with the law of the mind, and plainly implies a sanctifying knowledge of the objects exhibited in the law, and a hearty regard for them impressed upon the heart by the Spirit of God.

1. Then a leading ingredient of true grace consists in a view of the transcendent beauty of divine objects. The principal object viewed is the glory of God's moral perfections displayed in the salvation of lost sinners. This necessarily supposeth a view of Christ's willingness and ability to save; for it is in his face alone, that we can obtain "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God," (2 Cor. iv. 6,) a view of the extent, the spirituality, and purity of God's law, which is a transcript of his glory, and the means by which we are convinced of the need of Christ—a view of the fulness and amazing glory of the new covenant plan of life, in its nature, privileges, and precious promises—and, in short, it supposeth a just view of the various foundation-doctrines of the gospel, particularly of the necessity and beauty of holiness in its several branches. Of these things, true believers obtain views different in their nature and effects from the views of any graceless persons. The graceless, as rational creatures, may discern the meaning of words and propositions, the

connection of sentences, and the propriety of conclusions drawn from rational premises. But there is a spiritual and holy beauty in divine objects which, being morally blind and vitiated, they cannot discern nor relish; therefore, they have no just idea of the objects at all. Sin has spread a veil of darkness over their hearts, exceeding the midnight shades, and adding fresh gloom to hell itself. They understand gospel doctrines no otherwise than a logician understands a system of logic, viz: by the mere strength of natural powers. With devils, they may confess that Jesus is the Son of God; they may, with them, believe there is one God; nay, they may believe and tremble, without the least true discovery of, or the least affection for, his holy, transcendent beauties. Some may brand this doctrine with the odious name of enthusiasm; but I shall rest safely under the censure while divine testimony assures me, "that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. ii. 14. They are spiritually discerned, but he has not a spiritual eye to discern them.

Graceless sinners quite mistake the nature of divine objects. At one time, they conceive of God as all mercy; at another, as all justice; and again, will not conceive of him either as merciful or as just; but only think of him, as an idle, unconcerned spectator of the universe, "saying in their hearts, The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil." Zeph. i. 12. Before I proceed farther, I beg your patience, while I suggest an argument or two in proof

of this point. 1st. It appears from their dependence upon themselves for salvation, of which they are all guilty, whatever may be their profession to the contrary, or to whatsoever degree of knowledge they may have attained. But what false ideas must this suppose of the rectitude of Jehovah, the perfection of his law, and the awful malignity of sin! and what unbelief, as well as ignorance of the whole gospel scheme of life through Jesus Christ! 2d. Seeing the nature of the human soul is such, that it immediately makes choice of that which appears most excellent, and best for it in its present circumstances, their giving their preference to sin and the world, is a plain evidence that they do not understand nor relish the superior glory of divine things. How splendid soever their profession of religion may be, they do not believe what they profess, but are infidels in heart. They may, indeed, yield their assent to this truth, that religion is the best choice, and may resolve to be religious hereafter, but for the present they see more beauty in creatures, and taste more sweetness in creature enjoyments, than in holiness; nor would they ever resolve to be religious in any future period, nor ever desire any other than a Mahometan paradise, did they not fear the wrath of God.

Corrupt affections spread a veil over their hearts, and provoke Jehovah, in just resentment, to conceal his glory in a cloud of vengeance. Therefore, though they may sometimes be struck with awful apprehensions of his awful majesty, yet they do not discover the amiable glory and beauty of his perfections, till it pleases God to make them

shine upon their hearts in the face of Jesus Christ, by whose atonement the human offence was removed, and a way opened, in which he could, consistent with his glory, grant saving manifestations of himself to a lost and sinning world. But when the Holy Ghost rends the veil from their hearts, he discovers to them the transcendent beauties of Jehovah with such irresistible efficacy, and brightness of spiritual evidence, as transforms them into the same likeness; "for with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, they are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Cor. iii. 16—18. By that very influence which reveals the glory of God to them, the Holy Spirit forms in their hearts a supreme regard for his glory, which brings me to observe,

2. That a principle of grace necessarily includes a supreme affection for God. This affection is the very essence of holiness. For to view objects in their own nature, and to acquiesce in, and esteem them in proportion to their worth, is, doubtless, most fit and becoming. Now as God knows no equal, he cannot but view and acquiesce in his own glory as supreme; consequently, he cannot but have an infinite complacency, in a supreme affection for his glory, and an infinite displacency in the least disaffection thereto, in the reasonable creatures. This is his holiness, or the rectitude of his nature, and is the foundation and pattern of all moral excellency. But grace being the impression of God's moral image upon the soul, by which it bears a conformity to his holiness, there is necessarily

contained in its very essence a transcendent love for his glory.

It is the nature of sin to draw our affections off from God, and fix them upon the creatures; and it is the nature of grace to place them again upon God; "for they who are after the flesh, mind the things of the flesh; but they who are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." Rom. viii. 5. The saints esteem God as an object worthy of all their affections, and earnestly desire the enjoyment of him as the greatest good. They see a transcendent beauty in all his glories, and love him for them all—for his justice and holiness, as well as for his goodness. And because they love God, they love his image, in whomsoever they behold it, and every mean in which he affords them true communion with himself. The saints they esteem as "the excellent of the earth," and choose them as companions in their way to heaven. Psa. xiv. 2. They delight in the law of God as the transcript of his glory; and in the gospel, as the brightest glass by which his beauties are reflected. In one word, they take delight in the most spiritual sermons, books, and conversation, and in all the ordinances and duties of religion, because these are the means through which he displays his glory, and affords them the sweetest sensations of his love.

By this time, you may easily perceive, that the grand constituents of the new man are faith and love in their simple nature, *i. e.*, existing as principles of grace in the soul. In believers' views of divine objects, is implied such clear objective certainty, as obtains the firmest assent of

their minds to their reality and importance. This is faith in the understanding, in which sense faith is called, "the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding," (Col. i. 2,) "and the full assurance of the understanding." Col. ii. 2. And in this sense the gospel is said to have come to the Thessalonians "in much assurance." * 1 Thess. i. 5. Love being the sum of the divine law written upon the heart of our first parents, was an original affection of nature. This heaven-born beauty, which was lost by sin, is the glorious image drawn by the Holy Spirit, when he writes the law upon our hearts. Love is therefore the sum of religion. It was the reigning affection in innocence. It is the reigning affection in grace. And it will reign triumphant in glory, when the other graces shall for ever cease. The other graces, which only become necessary by our apostasy, and not from our original make, are evidences of love, and flow from it as their source.† From what has been said, we see with what

* Faith, in this view of it, is a necessary prerequisite to faith as seated in the will, which is the soul's choice of the object as good, the truth of which is apprehended by the understanding. Or, in other words, the soul's view of the truth and excellency of an object, necessarily precedes her embracing that object as good. But it is her choice of the object, which is the justifying act of faith; for this is that act, by which we accept of, and are united to, Christ. Nor is saving faith distinguished from the faith of hypocrites, only by the soul's embracing Christ, but also by her assent to his suitableness to save; for, as I have already observed, graceless persons never obtain a just view of divine objects; therefore, they never make choice of them.

† Love, being a principle of grace, is a necessary ingredient of all the graces, (which are specifically distinguished from each other, by their

propriety divines have called faith and love radical graces, and gracious principles. For, in their simple nature, they are holy principles, from whence all the graces grow up, as so many fruitful branches of holiness; they are the foundation of all those spiritual exercises of heart and practice, which are the native acts and evidences of a spiritual life.* If we are "God's workmanship created anew, it is to good works." Eph. ii. 10. God "takes away the stony heart out of our flesh, and gives us an heart of flesh, that we may walk in his statutes to do them" (Ezek. xxxix. 26, 27); viz: in that spiritual and holy manner, which is congruous to his holiness and the spirituality of his nature.

acts and motives,) and only differs from the acts of love, considered as a distinct grace, as a fountain differs from the streams which issue from it.

* God has implanted in nature, a principle of action suited to the various operations which arise from it. And can we suppose he will be less liberal in dispensing his special favours? Or that we can perform truly holy actions without a spiritual principle? As well may we expect streams without a fountain, or living actions from a dead carcase. "Being dead in trespasses and sins," we cannot exert the acts of a spiritual life, till animated from above with a living principle. While we continue in a state of nature, the ends, the motives, and the principles of our actions being merely selfish, they are morally evil, though the nature of them be good; therefore are they, in a spiritual sense, dead works. Yet we are not to suppose, that believers without the immediate concurrence of the Holy Spirit, can exert the acts of a spiritual life, by virtue of a principle of holiness disposing them thereto. For as it is by almighty power upholding the frame of nature, and keeping all its springs in tune, that we are enabled to perform natural actions; so it is only by the Holy Spirit's maintaining and exciting the principle of grace implanted in us, that we can perform spiritual actions. Therefore says Christ to his disciples, "Without me, ye can do nothing."

Our way is now prepared to show why grace is called "a law of the mind." Like a law, it has a prevailing influence over all the powers and operations, aims and pursuits of the mind. Laws are made for the government of their subjects, and for that purpose, afford light to direct, and motives to influence their conduct. But grace is a principle of light and love in the minds of believers; "light which shines brighter and brighter to the perfect day." Prov. iv. 18. The more they view divine objects, the more beauties they discover in them, and consequently, the more ardent is the flame of their love towards them. Love is a very powerful passion, which, by its sweetness, strongly impels the mind to desire, and endeavour to obtain, the enjoyment of its object; especially when its object is viewed as most amiable. Believers have, therefore, the most prevailing motives, both from within and without, to excite them to every pious exercise of heart and life. The incomparable beauty of divine objects, and the inexpressible sweetness of love to them, inflame their soul with strong desires to obtain the fullest enjoyment of them. Time would fail to mention the powerful motives to repentance and universal obedience, to every grace and every duty, arising from the personal, uncreated glories of Jehovah; from creating, preserving and redeeming goodness; from the fulness and excellent frame of the new covenant; from the endless glories and happiness of heaven; and from the necessity, reasonableness, sweetness and importance of religion in its various branches. But none are stronger or sweeter than those drawn from the cross of Christ.

The invincible charms of his love, the riches of his pardoning mercy, and the amazing stoops of his condescension therein displayed, sweetly open the springs of all the affections, and irresistibly captivate the whole soul.

Conscious of the comforts arising from spiritual views and affections, believers languish when they lose their frame, and with the solicitous spouse, importunately seek their Lord, until he is pleased to restore to them a sense of his love. And the more they drink of this fountain, the stronger they thirst. Their enjoyments only excite their desires. It is a natural and invincible property of the human mind, to desire not only a repetition, but higher degrees of those enjoyments, in which it finds a transcendent satisfaction. When the Lord condescended "to speak to Moses, face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend," the pleasure of this sweet interview excites him to put up this ardent prayer, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory." Ex. xxx. 11, 18. So insatiable was his desire, that, had his request been granted in its full extent, it would have proved fatal to his mortal frame; therefore the Lord says to him, "Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me and live." Ex. xxxiii. 20. A love to the end, reconciles them to the means of obtaining the end. Because they delight in communion with God, they delight in all his ordinances and commands, the means of communion with him. They desire to "remain in the house of the Lord, to behold his beauty, and be satisfied with marrow and fatness." Psa. xxvii. 4. lxiii. 1, 5. "Delighting in the law of God after the inward man,"

they perform the duties required in it, not of constraint, but with a ready mind, for their obedience is the willing offering of love. Rom. vii. 22. John xiv. 15. The most difficult as well as the most easy duties are their choice. And as holy objects have command of their hearts, they perform duty with fervency, when the edge of their affections is not blunted with temptation and sin. In one word, grace overcomes temptation, resists sin, excites believers to war a good warfare, and run with patience the race that is set before them, until they obtain the glorious prize at the end of their race. Thus does it powerfully prevail in the heart like a law. And, Oh! happy, inexpressibly happy for believers, were this the only principle which has influence upon their actions. But alas! another principle, the direct reverse of this, often disturbs their peace, and brings them into captivity to the law of sin. But this leads us, in the

II. place, to explain the nature of indwelling sin, and show why it is called a law of the members. Though believers are sanctified in every part, they are perfectly sanctified in none; a sinful principle remains in them which, like a law, operates in their members, and wars against the law of their minds. This principle is original corruption, and it is represented by the members of the body.

1. Because as the body is but one entire frame consisting of many members, so original sin is one mass of impurity, which defiles the whole man, and, therefore, consists of many branches. It is darkness in the understand-

ing, aversion to divine things in the will, filthiness in all the affections, baseness and irregularity in all the sensual appetites.

2. The principal reason why it is thus represented is, because it exerts itself chiefly in and by the members of the natural body. Sin altering the temperament of our bodies, has introduced into the animal frame such a strength and irregularity of sensual appetites, as powerfully attach our souls to sensible objects. By virtue of the law of union between our souls and bodies, they have a mutual influence upon each other: carnal appetites are corrected or excited by the views of the mind; the mind is subjected to carnal appetites. Sensitive propensities exciting fancy to sport with sensible flesh, pleasing objects, and these, in their turn, striking the fancy through the avenues of the senses, kindle an impure flame in the affections, and strongly attract them to forbidden objects, or fix them excessively on lawful ones. But so far as our affections for creatures exceed due bounds, so far they are taken off from God, and set in opposition to his glory.

From the carnal tendencies of the heart arise the most filthy scenes of drunkenness, uncleanness, gluttony, thefts, robberies, unlawful and excessive gambling, and frolicking of every kind. Besides these lusts that have their seat more immediately in the flesh, vices of the mind (such as pride, malice, envy, hatred, wrath) are called carnal lusts, and lusts of the flesh; not only because they are part of carnal men's characters, but also because they are excited and strengthened by the propensities of the flesh. All the

wild irregularities of fancy and passion are influenced by the irregularities which sin has introduced into the animal frame. Occasions to sin lie much in our flesh and blood. The enjoyments of sensible things, being agreeable to the flesh, are the object of carnal desires. The riches, the luxuries, the pomp, and the various gayeties of this life, are the gods of ungodly sinners, and temptations to the saints themselves. Fine clothes, fine houses, glittering equipages, and high sounding titles, strike the mind with their fancied beauty. Relishing dishes and flowing bowls please voluptuous palates. The adulterer's heart is caught by delusive charms. Large treasures and large estates are snares for the covetous. By Bathsheba's beauty, David's lust is inflamed, and Achan's covetous desire, by a wedge of gold. The glory of his kingdom swells the pride of Nebuchadnezzar's heart; and an unbounded thirst for unrivalled military honours, prompts Joab to jealousy and murder.

By this time it may easily appear, that indwelling sin is called a law of the members, because of the powerful influence it has upon the whole man. It clouds the understanding, bewitches the fancy, debauches the affections, sets the will in opposition to God, and turns all the members of the body into instruments of unrighteousness. The unregenerate are wholly under its power. They are carried away with "the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life." Being "after the flesh, they only mind the things of the flesh," *i. e.*, for these only they have a relish. Now every person's taste has a

governing influence upon his actions; nor will anything appear beautiful to the mind, for which it has no relish. But carnal men not only have no relish for the glory of God, but an unreconcilable enmity against it, as being contrary to their sensual inclinations; therefore they can see no beauty, nor taste any sweetness, in moral excellency. Their pursuits, aims, and desires, are altogether carnal. "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" are their leading queries; as if they were born only to pamper the flesh, and feed themselves up as oxen for the slaughter. Nor is there any species of wickedness into which they would not run with greater eagerness, than ever the horse rushed into the battle, were it not for the restraints laid upon them by Providence, conscience, education, and fear of divine wrath.

But grace obtaining the predominancy in the hearts of believers, they are happily delivered from the "dominion of sin." Rom. vi. 14. They have new thoughts, new hopes, new inclinations and designs; and the chief objects of their pursuits are spiritual. Yet are they afflicted with some of the carnal lusts which were born with them. Some of the former root of bitterness remaining in them, sprouts up, and, when divine influences are withdrawn, and they are off their guard, it will prevail. They are not all spirit. Faith's views are not yet perfect, nor their affections perfectly refined: though grace has subdued and regulated their appetites and passions, yet, while they live in a world of sense, sensible objects will sometimes entangle their affections and lead them into mournful cap-

tivity. This is one chief source of their falls and sorrows. Satan, apprehensive that the most likely way to prevail against our first parents, even when their minds were under no sinful bias, was by objects pleasing to their senses, presented to them the beauty and goodness of the forbidden fruit, by which means they were seduced to break the divine command. The same game he attempted to play with our Saviour, when he painted before him "all the kingdoms of the world with the glory of them," and promised him all these, "if he would fall down and worship him." Matt. iv. 8, 9. No wonder then, if, in this manner, he solicits, and sometimes beguiles the sons of grace into sinful compliances, in whom there is corruption to catch at his temptations, as powder to catch at the spark.

Some of the saints find a much greater difficulty in mortifying the deeds of the body, than others, and are much more easily overcome by them. This flows, no doubt, from the much greater strength of their passions, and irregularity of their fluids. From the very contexture of their frame, some of them are more passionate, or proud, or peevish, or malicious, or wanton, than others of their fellow saints; while others, again, are sunk in despondency, and almost perpetually deluged with distressing sorrows. It was said of a great man of God, he had "grace enough for ten men, but had not half enough for himself, because his natural constitution was so violent and passionate." Peter was rash and hot-headed. Thomas seems to have been sour and unbelieving. But John, highly favoured in nature as well as grace, lived in love.

But though the saints are sometimes overcome by the temptations of Satan joining with the corruption of their hearts, yet grace shall usually prevail, and finally triumph in victory. Of this, our Lord assures them, when he promises, that "the water which he shall give them, shall be in them a well of water, springing up to everlasting life," (John iv. 14,) *i. e.*, the influences of the Holy Ghost, which first infused grace into their hearts, shall continue therein as a vital fountain, ever sending forth the salutary streams of holiness, till spiritual life shall be perfected in eternal life and glory. By the continued union of the Holy Spirit with their spirits, the principle of grace is preserved, strengthened, and excited to its various exercises, "till they come to the measure of the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus." Eph. iv. 13. Yet while they are in the body, "the flesh will lust against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these being contrary, the one to the other," (Gal. v. 17,) you may see in them, "as it were the company of two armies." Cant. vi. 13.

From what has been said, we learn, that the believer is indeed a mystery, the greatest in our lower world. He is both a sinner and a saint; he has in him both the old nature and the new—a love to God, and enmity against him. He is black, yet comely; carnal, yet spiritual; earthly, yet has set his affections upon things above. He is a mixture of the most opposite qualities, represented by the most opposite things in nature—the poison of the serpent and innocence of the dove; the sublimity of the eagle, and meanness of the crawling worm! Nay, he is a mix-

ture of heaven, earth and hell! In sin, he resembles devils; angels, in holiness; and in his animal nature, he is akin to the beasts that perish!

Again, if occasions to sin lie much in your flesh, it ought to be much of your care, with the apostle Paul, "to keep your bodies under, and bring them into subjection." 1 Cor. ix. 27. You must guard all the avenues of sense. I "made a covenant with mine eyes," said Job, "that I should not look upon a maid." Avoid as much as possible every means of provoking sensual lusts and appetites. If you place your happiness in the gratification of these, what are you better than the brutes? These are the only pleasures they know, or are capable of knowing. But you are capable of pleasures more refined—pleasures arising from intellectual views, and the enjoyment of eternal, invisible glories. If you do not fix your affections on those glories, you forfeit the rational character, and degrade yourselves to the level of mere animals. Endeavour to obtain clear views of the superior glories of spiritual objects, the beauty and sweetness of which will deaden your affections to the things of time and sense. With Solomon, learn this lesson, that every thing below the sun is vanity.

Especially let those of affluent circumstances learn it; for in treasuring up riches, you treasure up fuel to feed the flame of lust. This is a powerful argument to excite the poor to be contented with their condition, and bless God for what they enjoy. If he withholds this world's goods from you, he only withholds the snares that prove the destruction of multitudes.

Because the allurements of sense are enemies to religion, God, in infinite wisdom and goodness, has so ordered matters concerning his people, that those who are rich in faith, are generally poor in this world. Riches, in themselves, are the blessings of providence, and God will give to a number of his people such a portion of them, as he sees needful to enable them to support the external interests of his kingdom. Yet, if we may credit infinite veracity, they are great temptations to a degenerate world. "How hardly," says Christ, "shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." Mark x. 23, 25. The splendour of a crown, the glitter of external pomp, and the soothing enchantments of an affluent fortune, are delusive baits to sensual hearts.

THE SPIRITUAL CONFLICT.

BY THE REV. ROBERT SMITH, D. D.

"But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."—Rom. vii. 23.

Having, in the preceding discourse treated of the principle of sin and holiness, I proceed, in the

III. Place, to explain the conflict between these in the hearts of believers, and give some marks by which it may be distinguished from the uneasiness arising in the breasts of unbelievers.

1. The cause of the strife, is the irreconcilable contrariety of those jarring principles, the one to the other. The essence of holiness, as has been manifested in the preceding sermon, consists in love to God. Sin is unyielding enmity against him. But love and hatred being very powerful, and directly opposite in their operation, a warm debate necessarily arises between them, and will subsist so long as there are any remains of sin to oppose the operations of grace. The question therefore to be resolved,

for the assistance of solicitous enquirers about their spiritual state, are not whether they have no love to sin, and no hatred to holiness; but whether there is in their hearts a real principle of holiness, resisting the operations of sin; and what is the ground of this opposition? Believers being conformed to God in affections and views, the reason of their regard to holiness, and, consequently, of their opposition to sin, must be the same with his, viz: the intrinsic beauty of the one, and deformity of the other. They see a beauty, and taste a sweetness, in holiness, inconceivably surpassing the beauty and sweetness of all earthly enjoyments. By this, they are enabled to glorify God, by this, they enjoy the comfort of communion with him, and the perfection of this they wait and long for as the very perfection of happiness. Doubtless, souls of a mould so heavenly cannot but resent the hostile invasions, when sin, as a bold usurper, assumes the throne. They hate it, because it is hateful to God, and rises in opposition to his glory. "Against thee, thee only have I sinned," says David, "and done this evil in thy sight!" Psa. li. 4. What! Had not David sinned against his own soul? Against Bathsheba? Against Uriah? Against his whole kingdom? Against all these, no doubt; but this single thought, the dishonour his sin had done to God, overwhelms his impressions of all its other evils. Saint Paul speaks the language of every Christian, when he laments his wretchedness by reason of sin, and earnestly wrestles for deliverance from it, as a vile, an oppressive, body of death. Rom. vii. 24.

But unbelievers' debate with sin arises only from con-

science and reason declaiming against the indulgence of vicious inclinations, as subjecting them to the wrath of God. They do not oppose it from any dislike to it, or any love to holiness. Give them their carnal pleasures, and they desire no other heaven. They hate the holiness of God, and did they not fear his justice, they would not attempt the obedience of his commands in one single instance, nor refrain from any vice to which their degenerate natures are inclined. There are persons, indeed, who, without either virtue or grace, may not have a propensity to some particular vices: they may, from their natural constitution, be averse to drunkenness, and yet be wretched, covetous worldlings. One sin may also contend with another. Prodigality opposes avarice, and avarice prodigality. Yet this is only a debate between the flesh and the flesh. But grace is ever uniform, all the graces being united in perfect harmony, and materially aiding to each other.

2. This conflict, as to its *nature*, resembles both a foreign and domestic war. Carnal reasoning in the understanding, and spiritual desires in the will, mutually oppose each other, as do also faith in the understanding, and carnal desires in the will. Carnal reason pleads for the indulgence of the flesh; spiritual desires resist the flesh, and give the preference to holiness. Sensual inclinations reject the cross of Christ as too heavy; faith endures, "as seeing him who is invisible." Nor does the debate subsist only between the different powers of the soul, but is also in the very same powers; by which means each of

them seems to be set in opposition to itself. In the same understanding faith and carnal reason contend with each other, and the desires of the flesh and spirit in the same will. It is sweet to carnal desires to fulfil the lusts of the flesh; spiritual desires prefer communion with Christ, as much sweeter. Carnal reason says, To trim with the times may be useful to ourselves and the Church of Christ; faith bids us strictly follow the path of duty, and commit events to God, "whose counsel shall stand fast, and he will do all his pleasure." But as there is no spiritual light in the minds of graceless sinners to resist the dictates of carnal reason, nor holiness in their affections to resist the lustings of the flesh, their contest with sin is wholly of the foreign kind. They are altogether unacquainted with the vigorous efforts of faith and love, and their victories over carnal reasoning and affections.

3. True believers have "respect to all God's commandments, and hate every false way," and, therefore, maintain a war with *every* sin. Sensible of the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of their hearts, they fight not only with outward evils, but with their inbred corruptions, and with secret as well as open sins; with sins of lesser aggravations, as well as those of greater; with sins which promise worldly honour, interest and safety, as well as those which threaten the contrary. Secrecy, respect, interest, importunity, and almost every temptation conspired to persuade Joseph to comply with the solicitations of his wanton mistress; but the respect he paid to the honour and approbation of an all-seeing God had greater

influence upon his conduct, than any selfish motives whatsoever. "How (says he) shall I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Gen. xxxix. 9. Deeply affected with the depravity of their natures, they enter into the secret recesses of their hearts, and bewail those iniquities of which God and their own souls are conscious. David most heartily confesses, and prays to be cleansed from, his original corruption, as the filthy source of all his actual transgressions. "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." Psa. l. 5, 10.

But in nothing is the honesty of their hearts more fully evinced, than in their keeping themselves from the iniquity, which is by nature and habit their most beloved lust. Psa. xviii. With this they are willing to part, though naturally dear and pleasant to them, as a "right hand or a right eye." Against this divine grace has fixed their firmest resolutions. This is the cause of their greatest sorrows, and to obtain victory over this, affords them the greatest pleasure. But when the unconverted make any resistance at all against sin, it is generally against those sins which expose them to shame and punishment in this world; against atrocious crimes, which are most apt to affect conscience: or against some particular crimes, to the commission of which they have not a strong temptation in the flesh; or of which, through custom and education, they may have contracted a kind of abhorrence. These they may part with to pacify conscience, and retain their beloved lusts with greater ease.

But they are very little, if at all, attentive to the wickedness of their hearts, except when seized with affliction, or a pang of conscience, and even then, their sensations are soon lost, and all their resolutions soon forgotten. They pray for the destruction of sin, while they desire to indulge it; and, Felix-like, defer any proper vigorous attempts to obtain their request, till a more convenient season; or as Augustine, who in the days of his vanity, prayed to be made chaste, his heart in the meantime repeating, "Not too soon, Lord, not too soon." Oh that the youth in this assembly, would treasure up this sentence in their hearts!

4. We proceed to take notice of the *manner* in which spiritual soldiers carry on a war with sin. Possessed with an irreconcilable hatred to the camp of the enemy, they resolve to give no quarter, and admit of no correspondence with them, nor any cessation of arms. Therefore do they engage warmly, with a fixed determination not to yield. They strive for victory, and take the kingdom of heaven by holy violence; others make a feint of fighting, but *they* exert all their strength and policy. Nothing short of complete victory will afford them satisfaction. Jealous of the fair promises and alluring baits of sin and the world, they are fully resolved to reject all their deceitful enticements. In an unguarded moment, indeed, they may be surprised by a violent onset; or, by stratagem, may be taken captive for a season. Yet will not their hearts ever be reconciled to the camp and interest of the enemy. They cannot usually take pleasure in meditating upon sin,

nor commit it with the same complacence and peace of mind as graceless sinners do. Conscious of its baseness, and the comforts of which it deprives them, their pleasure is lessened in the very act. And when dragged into captivity by it, languishing after their former sweet spiritual liberties, they cannot enjoy themselves, nor be contented, until they return to the camp of Christ. Therefore exerting themselves to the utmost to shake off the bonds of their captivity, they rally again, and renew the attack with greater vigour than before. By the searchless wisdom and goodness of God, their foils are improved to the destruction of their sins, and become a means of their standing more sure. For by these being taught the strength and policy of their enemies, their own weakness, and their daily need of divine aid, they are excited to greater watchfulness, take the field with firmer resolution than ever, and cease not, until they obtain an eternal triumph.

But as there is not that antipathy between sin and natural reason, as there is between sin and holiness, graceless folks soon drop the arms they seemed to have taken up against sin. It is too powerful for the strongest and best refined reason. To whatsoever degrees of improvement the natural man may attain, he has still a hearty affection for sin; therefore, a truce with it is very pleasing to him. Ready to hearken to the cravings of the flesh, and receive for truth the false colouring which Satan and a depraved fancy put upon the dalliance of his heart with sin, temptations to the commission of it easily obtain his

consent. His debate with it is like that of the wind with the tide, which may presently tack about, and go in the same direction with the tide. The hypocrite will not always call upon God. His goodness is like the morning cloud and early dew, it goeth away. Hos. vii. 4. He will either plague the church with false zeal, or degenerate into dry formality, or, abandoning religion entirely, he will fall into the most pernicious errors in principle, in practice, or in both. The unclean spirit returning with seven other spirits more wicked than himself, they enter into him, and his last state is worse than the first. Matt. xii. 43—45. Such persons in every age have given the greatest wound to religion.

5. Spiritual warriors make use of the *whole armour* of God. Truth or sincerity of heart and conversation is the guide of their lives. For a breast-plate, they put on the exercise of universal righteousness and holiness. Their feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, *i. e.*, all their conduct and pursuits are influenced by gospel principles and motives. For an helmet they take the hope of salvation, which bears up their spirits amidst every danger, and fortifies them against every furious attack. Above all, they take the shield of faith, wherewith they are enabled to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. Through faith they receive of Christ's fulness, and grace for grace—grace to resist and overcome every temptation, and every sin: so clear, so sweet, and so glorious are its views, that they kindle in their hearts the warmest affection for its objects, while they disengage them from the

pursuit of carnal pleasures. By this, they see that spiritual objects infinitely transcend the value of every thing below the sun. By this, they take a distant prospect of heaven, and converse with invisible glories far beyond the reach of sense. And by this, their eye is steadily fixed on the crown of life promised to those who overcome. This, therefore, is the very spring of all the strength, courage, and vigour necessary for the spiritual warfare.

In the hand of faith they carry the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. This is a piece of armour, which never fails them—armour with which, after the example of the Captain of their salvation, they overcome the tempter. Soon as they present to the devil the sword of the Spirit, like a coward he flies off. Are they, in a gloomy hour, tempted to think their sins are so heinous, they cannot be pardoned? The word of God informs them, that, "where sin abounded, grace much more abounds." Does Satan take the advantage of their spiritual pride, to excite them to trust their own strength and goodness? This informs them, that "all their own righteousnesses are as filthy rags," and that "Christ alone is the Lord, their righteousness and strength." In a long night of desertion, they are supported with the promise, that "the vision will speak, though it seem to tarry." And as an encouragement to prayer, the Holy Ghost is promised to be in them, as "a Spirit of grace and supplication." Nor are they called to perform any duty, resist any temptation, endure any suffering, nor is there any circumstance they can be in whatsoever, but there is still something in God's word

suited to that very case. It is therefore a noble mean to assist them in the spiritual warfare. And as often as they forget their sword, or fail in the proper use of it, so often their adversary obtains an advantage of them.

Finally, sensible of their own utter insufficiency for their duty, they constantly wait at the throne of grace, in all sorts of earnest addresses to God, for skill to use their armour, and strength to vanquish all their enemies. Jacob-like, they wrestle with God, until they obtain a blessing, the Holy Ghost helping their infirmities, and enabling them to make known their requests, with groans which cannot be uttered. But carnal persons use carnal weapons, or spiritual weapons in a carnal manner. They consult carnal reason more than the word of God; and instead of a dependence upon Christ, they trust their own goodness, strength, and wisdom; careless about holiness of heart, they rest in their outward reformations, and duties, or in some common, superficial impressions made by the Holy Spirit upon their minds. As the Jews followed Christ for the loaves, they sometimes make a show of following him only from worldly views. They profess religion to obtain character and interest among men, or gain the favour of particular persons, upon whom they have a dependence. But let the hopes of their gain be over, and their care about religion is over. Slavish fears of hell, and mercenary hopes of heaven, are their highest inducements to perform any duty, or resist any sin. The sweetness and intrinsic excellence of the exercise have no influence at all upon them.

The Improvement.

I. What has been said saps the foundation of the hypocrite's hope, and may afford assistance in solving a case of conscience, which often perplexes doubting Christians. They are puzzled to reconcile the prevalence of sin, which they sometimes feel in their own hearts, with their interest in the divine promise that it "shall not have dominion over them." Rom. vi. 14. But it is the allowed and usual sway of sin, against which the promise affords them security. Now it may, at times, bring them into captivity, though it does not generally rule in them, nor will they live in friendship with it by any means. When the Holy Spirit withdraws, in just resentment for their untenderness, they may apprehend that they feel in their hearts the workings of blasphemous thoughts, unbelief, self-righteousness, and various carnal propensities, almost in their full strength. They may also be so far left of God, as to fall into very heinous crimes. At such seasons conscience may be exceedingly benumbed; and though they do not entirely cast off a regard to religion, yet their desires after Christ are very languid; and when they attempt to seek him like the spouse upon her bed, they do it in a careless, trifling manner. Yet they cannot be easy while at a distance from him. They are sold under sin, and this is their burden. Rom. vii. 14, 24. All the while they live in it, they do that which they allow not; that which they hate. Rom. vii. 15. Their spark of

spiritual life, however smothered, is not wholly extinguished. Though they sleep, their hearts wake, and they know the voice of their Beloved when he knocks for entrance. Cant. v. 2. His endearing voice, speaking to them in reproofs, directions, invitations, and promises, revives their decaying graces, and excites them to seek Christ with carefulness and importunity until they find him, and are enabled to say, "My Beloved is mine and I am his." Cant. v. & vi. 3. And when enlarged by divine grace, they are most watchful against every sin, especially against a relapse into their former backslidings. They are daily subject to invincible human infirmities; nor shall they ever in this life obtain a perfect freedom from the body of death; yet they are scarcely, if at all, guilty of repeating the same gross offences. We hear of Noah's drunkenness but once, and but once of David's adultery. They may, indeed, repeat the same offence, before they are restored by actual repentance: as Peter thrice denied his Lord; but we read of his denying him no more after he went out, and wept bitterly.

But to be repeatedly guilty of the same crimes; to live in the constant practice of sin; to roll it as a sweet morsel under your tongue, or to allow it the peaceable possession of your hearts, is inconsistent with a state of grace. "Whosoever is born of God, cannot sin (in this sense); for his seed remaineth in him." 1 John iii. 9. And though you may sometimes attempt to resist its operations, yet has it the full consent of your souls, if arguments drawn from shame and punishment have greater influence

to restrain you from it, than those drawn from the love of Christ, the beauties of holiness, and the intrinsic vileness of sin itself.

2. This subject points out your duty, who have enlisted in the spiritual warfare. Be diligent, faithful, and courageous in fighting "the good fight of faith." In order to this, it will be of great advantage to be well acquainted with the motions, the strength, the stratagems of your enemies. You wrestle not only with flesh and blood, but with principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickednesses. Eph. vi. 12. All the embattled troops of hell conspire with the world and your own wicked hearts to plot your ruin. Sometimes the devil succeeds in his hellish designs by crafty wiles, and sometimes by violent assaults. It is one of his crafty wiles to paint sin as duty, and duty as sin. Under the notion of greater purity, he persuades people to refrain from ordinances purely administered. When offended with fellow professors, he slily insinuates that resentment is a Christian duty. But whatsoever varnish he puts upon it, a desire of revenge is generally at the bottom, rather than the glory of God, the interest of the church, or the good of an offending brother. Sometimes he persuades them, that they may please their imaginations without much danger, by indulging them in painting a fanciful scene, whereby their affections are ensnared before they are aware, and they are inclined to the commission of some base iniquity, contrary to their first design or expectation. Now he fills them with great disquietude, by painting their difficulties in the strongest colours; now, leading

them into the fools' paradise, he so tickles their minds with scenes of vanity, that they forget the evil day till it comes upon them with double distress. One while he would seem to turn advocate for heaven, persuading them their sins are so heinous that they cannot be forgiven consistent with the divine honour; at another time, concealing the turpitude of sin, and fixing their minds intensely on their good affections and good deeds, he excites in them spiritual pride and self-confidence. When he cannot seduce them by crafty wiles, he attempts to overcome them by storm, before they have time to fortify themselves against his violent assaults. Taking the advantage of a critical juncture to raise their fears, he suddenly hurries them into sin in order to screen themselves, or escape an apprehended danger, as in the case of Peter, when he denied his Lord with oaths and cursing. He plays upon them with all his fiery darts, such as blasphemous injections, temptations to part with Christ, or question the reality of religion; fiery darts, indeed, and most painful, the poison whereof seems to drink up their exhausted spirits. By such means as these, Satan will try to gain ground upon you; to prevent which, you ought to learn the nature of his temptations, and the means by which they may be repelled. Learn your weak side, and guard it well, for on this quarter the attacks of the enemy are most likely to succeed. Be constantly careful to mortify all the deeds of the body, especially your constitutional sin. In this, nature affords the tempter a double advantage against you; this has the command of other lusts. Take

the leader, then, and the whole band will be easily routed. In order to assist you in finding it out, I shall give you some of its leading characters. It is that sin, which you have most frequently wished were no sin ; that on account of which you have been enabled to endure the greatest difficulties ; that for which conscience is most apt to accuse you, and for which invention is most ready to find out excuses; it is that sin which disturbs you most in your secret retirements, crowds first upon your thoughts in the morning, employs them most in the silent watches of the night, and most easily carries away your heart at any time.

Watch against and resist the very first motions of sin. Lay restraint upon the first sallies of corrupt affections and wandering thoughts. Whenever you find imagination begin to be pleased with tempting baits, to devise excuses for the indulgence of the flesh, or for the neglect or careless performance of duty, then you may be assured you are falling into temptation, and that it is high time for you to be upon your guard. Immediately check the dalliance of your hearts with forbidden objects, and hold not the least correspondence with the enemy. Want of care, in this point, was the source of the numerous train of miseries, into which the whole human race are plunged.

Take unto you the whole armour of God. Be skilful, be constant, be active in the use of every part of the spiritual armour. It is a shame for a soldier to loiter, or suffer his arms to lie by him rusty. If you quit your arms, or turn your backs, you will, doubtless, fall a prey

to your enemies. Armour is provided for every part except your back, to teach you that you must maintain the war with courage, and persevering constancy. There is no discharge in this warfare, while you are in your enemies' country, or any of them infest your borders; but thousands of them every moment besiege your hearts. The Christian life is a life of progress, in order to which the continued exercise of grace is necessary, especially of faith, which is the life of every grace. The various ordinances are conduits for the communication of divine influences to mortify your corruptions and quicken your graces. These are appointed as means to lead your minds away from the world, and fix them upon spiritual objects, the beauty of which kindles in the heart a growing affection for them; but a growing affection for spiritual objects is the life and increase of holiness, and the increase of holiness is the destruction of sin, your mortal enemy. If, then, you neglect to stir up the gift of grace God has bestowed upon you, by neglecting the means appointed for that purpose, you will decay in spiritual strength, and your enemies will prevail against you.

Finally, follow the directions and example of your Leader, and keep close by his standard. A brave general is the life of war. But in Christ you have the most glorious example to influence all your conduct, and aid for the performance of all your duty—an example of diligence, watchfulness, zeal, courage, wisdom, and faithfulness in fulfilling all righteousness and resisting every temptation. Continually imitate this worthy pattern, and look to the Captain of

your salvation for all the succours you need. He has every supply to give, and you have an oath and promise that "as your day is so shall your strength be." Keep close by the camp of Christ, for if you carelessly wander from it, you will fall into the hands of your enemies. Follow "the footsteps of the flock." Spiritual example and spiritual conversation are noble means of promoting the spiritual life. It is an unspeakable advantage to have brave assistants in the field of battle; their heroism inspires their fellows to noble actions. But those who are with our Lord "are called, and faithful, and chosen;" whose faith follow, and imitate them as far as they imitate Christ. Tread in the steps of those worthy heroes, who have trod the paths of virtue and grace before you, and having distinguished themselves by their noble achievements, now gloriously triumph before the throne.

Did you need motives to excite you to duties so necessary and so noble, I might observe to you the glory of the cause which you have espoused. You have enlisted to fight the battles of the King of glory. The royalties of heaven have been invaded, and you are called to resist the bold invader. Consider also the dignity of your character—a brave soldier has been a glorious character in every age; but what is the glory of the Alexanders, the Scipios, and all the renowned heroes of antiquity, to the glory of the spiritual soldier—a soldier under the Lord of hosts! To subdue one corruption is greater glory than to conquer a kingdom—a world! Yes, greater glory than to conquer ten thousand worlds! How great the glory, then, to

obtain victory over your innumerable lusts, the countless temptations of an ensnaring world, and the prince of darkness himself, with all his furious, infernal forces! Besides, you go not a warfare at your own charge. Your armour is provided, and everything you need for the warfare. Take a view of what it is for which you fight—not for a spot of earth—not for a temporal throne or kingdom—not for a crown of yellow dust—No! but for an everlasting kingdom! for a crown of glory which fadeth not away! Nor is it for another you fight, but for yourselves. Every spiritual soldier shall reign for ever as a king. "To him that overcometh," saith Christ, "will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Rev. iii. 23. And the more valiant you are for the Lord of hosts, your crown will shine with the more distinguished brightness. Oh, the dignity of the martyrs' crown! the glory of their reward, who have gone to heaven through a sea of blood! The eternal weight of glory you have in prospect as a reward of victory, is sufficient to awaken all your strength, to rouse all your resolution, and inflame all the ardour of your breasts. Nor do you proceed upon uncertainties; the Captain of your salvation has secured to you the victory. Upon the cross he triumphed over all his enemies, and yours. In dying he conquered death, and him that has the power of death; and now he is exalted to his eternal throne, he holds the keys of hell and death. Courage, then, O Christians! courage—You shall be more than conquerors through him that loved you, and washed

you in his own blood! To arms! to arms! A few strokes more, and you win the crown for ever!

3. I shall finish this discourse with an address to graceless sinners—to you who still continue in Satan's interests! Each of you I address under this character, who live in the practice of any known sin of heart or life; who live in the neglect of any known duty to God or man; who take pleasure in the service of Satan, and in the conversation of those who join with him in his conspiracy against heaven; who never felt the arrows of conviction stick fast in your hearts, nor ever have dropped the weapons of your rebellion; who have never by faith enlisted with Christ, nor ever engaged in the spiritual warfare. You are enemies to Christ, and join in confederacy with his bitterest enemies. Christ has set up a standard in our guilty world, and by the offers of the gospel invites your flight to it. Satan has also set up a standard in opposition to Christ, and by the various corruptions of your nature, the allurements of the world, and his sly insinuations, he binds you to his interest. His promises are fair but false. He makes large promises of much comfort in the world and in the indulgence of your filthy lusts. He persuades you that there is no great danger, nor any necessity for so much earnestness about religion as ministers urge you to: there is enough time to repent, God is merciful, and will not be severe to mark small offences against you. True, God is merciful, blessed be his name! but he is just as well as merciful; and never, never will he exercise mercy to the prejudice of his justice! If you continue in your sins,

you shall perish. If you expect to be happy, you must renounce all your lusts, and all the vanities of this deluding world. You must enlist in the spiritual warfare, put on the armour of Christ and wear his livery. You must have common friends, common enemies, and common interests with him. And can all this be done by a few lazy wishes, and ineffectual resolutions? No! to obtain true religion, is not so easy to corrupt nature as some imagine. Indolent souls have no claim to it. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." You must deny yourselves, take up your cross and follow Christ, if you expect to enter into heaven. You must strive, you must wrestle, you must fight, for the crown. Rouse, then, O sinner! rouse from your fatal security! an hour's delay may cost you an eternity of sufferings!

Your present warfare is most base, dangerous, and unreasonable. You commit hostilities against the "Lord of lords and King of kings;" his royalties you have invaded, his authority contemned, trampled upon his laws, and cut off your allegiance to him. You have revolted from his government, turned enemies to his crown; and, were it possible, would not only dethrone Jehovah, but destroy his being: for "the fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Oh, your horrid ingratitude against the parent of your being—the God of all your mercies! By his power you live, and every moment of your life you receive countless favours from the unwasted treasures of his goodness; and yet you join against him with cursed demons who, for

their base revolt, were damned to the bottomless pit. And this is all the wages you shall receive, if you persevere in your present warfare.

Your conduct is not only wicked, but weak, and the consequences of it will be terrible to your souls if persisted in. You rebel against Him, who in one moment can dash you in pieces as a potter's sherd. The pillars of heaven totter, and the everlasting hills bow before him! If he look on the mountains, they smoke, and the most obdurate devils in hell tremble at his presence! How, then, shall worms of the dust bear up under the weight of his wrath? Why should you attempt the unequal war? Are you a match for Jehovah? Can you thunder with a voice like his? Can you bear the lightning of his glittering spear? He has levelled all the artillery of heaven against you! prepared his instruments of death! fixed his arrows upon the string! whet his sword—his sword edged with all the flaming vengeance of God! Harness yourselves for the battle, O ye rebels! Clothe you with all your hellish armour, your hardness of heart, your presumption, your atheism and infidelity, your horrid oaths and imprecations, and try if they will be any defence in the day of his anger, in the day when he shall come forth to avenge the injuries of insulted majesty! Oh, what language, what idea can paint the displeasure of incensed Deity! Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish is its mildest voice! But to all this punishment you are exposed, my poor, thoughtless, deluded fellow mortals! If you turn not from the evil of your ways, the tempest of his fury shall beat upon your naked souls, in one eternal, unremitted storm.

Drop, then, O guilty sinners! drop the weapons of your rebellion! submit to the Lord Jesus Christ! Touch his peaceful sceptre, lest he break you in pieces with his iron rod! The flag of mercy held out in the gospel invites you over to the camp of Christ; the glory of the cause in which you are called to engage invites you; and all the rewards of victory invite you—rewards the most glorious and most certain. If you enlist in the spiritual warfare, you shall overcome through the blood of the Lamb and the word of his testimony. You shall triumphantly enter the new Jerusalem with palms of everlasting victory.

SAMUEL FINLEY, D. D.

Dr. Finley was born in the County of Armagh, in Ireland, in the year 1715, and was one of seven sons, who were all esteemed pious.

The parents of Dr. Finley were of Scotch descent, and were distinguished for their piety. Finding their son to be of a quick capacity, and fond of learning, they resolved to give him the best education which their circumstances would admit; and after he had obtained the rudiments of an English education, he was sent abroad some distance from home, to prosecute his studies. In this school, he distinguished himself by his assiduity and his proficiency in learning.

When he was in his nineteenth year, he emigrated to America. He arrived in Philadelphia, on the 28th of September, in the year 1734. He appears to have become a subject of divine grace, at a very early age. Upon his coming to America, he steadily pursued his studies with a view to the holy ministry. And as he arrived in Philadelphia at the very time when Mr. Tennent's school was flourishing at Neshaminy, and as there was then no other institution in the Presbyterian Church where young men were trained for the ministry, there is the strongest probability that he was a student at the Log College. This probability is strengthened by the fact that he put himself under the care of the New Brunswick Presbytery, most of the members of which were educated in this school. His licensure took place on the 5th of August, in the year 1740. Having

received authority to preach, he itinerated extensively; and, as his pulpit talents were of a high order of excellence, he was eminently useful.

His labours were greatly blessed in West Jersey;—in Deerfield, Greenwich, and Cape May. He preached also for six months, with great acceptance, in the congregation to which Gilbert Tennent was afterwards called, in Philadelphia. His ordination took place on the 13th of October, in the year 1742. He was probably ordained as an evangelist, and continued to visit the places destitute of the stated means of grace, for several years; and all accounts agree in ascribing much success to his itinerant labours. It is probably during this period, while preaching in a congregation in New Haven, on account of the rigid laws of the land, he was seized as a vagrant, and carried beyond the limits of the colony. He does not appear to have been permanently settled as a pastor, until June, 1744,when he accepted a call from Nottingham, Maryland. In this place he remained for seventeen years. It was here, also, he established an academy, with the view, chiefly, of preparing young men for the ministry.

Dr. Finley was elected president of the College of New Jersey in the year 1761, and immediately entered upon the duties of his office, and the trustees were not disappointed in their expectations of his wisdom and efficiency. As he was permitted to remain five years in office, he had the opportunity of carrying into effect plans for the improvement of the institution, so that its reputation was greatly extended.

The disease of which he died was brought on by too great assiduity in his studies, and too constant occupation in the public duties of his office. He did not die at home, but in the city of Philadelphia, whither he had gone to consult physicians respecting his disease. His death occurred on the 16th day of July, 1766, in the fifty-first year of his age.

His death-bed experience was most remarkable, which can be seen in his biography in the "Log College."

THE MADNESS OF MANKIND.

A SERMON BY THE REV. SAMUEL FINLEY, PREACHED IN THE "NEW PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH," PHILADELPHIA, JUNE 9TH, 1754.

"And madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead."—ECCL. ix. 3.

WHOEVER seriously views and wisely considers the manners of mankind, and brings them to the test of right reason, will be forced to receive the same melancholy idea of them represented in this text. The words are Solomon's, who was not only an indefatigable student of nature, but an accurate observer of divine providence, of the conduct of men, and the several consequences of actions, divine and human. He here tells us the result of his researches respecting these. As to providence, that though God has a special regard to the holy and good, yet in external things he makes no difference, but "all things come alike to all." As to mankind, that they take occasion from these promiscuous dispensations to commit wickedness without reserve. "Their heart is full of evil;" for they observe, that "such as work wickedness are set up; and they who tempt God are even delivered." Mal. iii. 15.

This has sometimes been puzzling to the pious, but has struck the ungodly with madness. Hence it comes, that "madness is in their heart while they live."

Madness is a state of irregularity and discomposure. The person affected with it is not fixed in his purpose; is not influenced in his conduct by the most engaging motives; pays no regard to the dictates of right reason; nor is careful about what is decorous, disadvantageous, or dangerous. Now, we are assured by unerring truth, that this is the state of the "sons of men." It is true, they make high pretences to wisdom, and have a show of it; but "the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." 1 Cor. iii. 19. If madness were concealed in the heart, we could not discover it; but "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matt. xii. 34); and so by mens' words and actions we come to know what is in their hearts. Hence, a course of life contrary to right reason, and just rules of conduct, will evidence heart-madness.

In treating this subject, I am naturally led to show wherein the madness of human hearts discovers itself. This cannot be done but by mentioning particular instances of human conduct. And as I apprehend that the method of such a narration is in a great measure arbitrary, I shall not attempt a nice arrangement of the general heads in natural order, but propose them as they occur.

I. Precipitant conclusions concerning persons, things, or opinions, formed without evidence, and often in defiance of demonstration to the contrary, discover a degree of madness. The crowd of mankind determine the most im-

portant points, without weighing the reasons on both sides of the question. In their own imagination they quickly penetrate matters, which to the more judicious are abstruse and intricate. If they embrace truth, it is by accident. They contend for religion not because they see its proper evidence, but because they have been accustomed to it. And thus they may be orthodox and regular Christians, from no better principles than those from which the Turks are Mohammedans. Nay, they form their judgment of religion, the highest concern of all, with more indifference than of the small affairs of this life. From hence arise the many sottish opinions, wild reveries, and destructive heresies, that pass for pure religion with their respective votaries, divide the christianized world into so many opposite parties, are contended for with a peremptoriness that knows not to yield to argument, and promoted frequently with a bitter, sometimes with a bloody zeal. What intelligent Christian is there, who, without a mixture of pity and contempt, can observe the professors of wisdom become fools (Rom. i. 22); hear the dictates of eternal wisdom pronounced folly, with a supercilious air, and fanciful chimeras substituted in its room? It would seem as though the faculty of reasoning was, to many, given in vain; while one asserts the uselessness of it in religion, another, its *sufficiency* in our lapsed state. This denies the necessity of any divine revelation; that asserts, every circumstance must be immediately revealed. One thinks saving grace consists in moral honesty; another places it in the observance of invented forms. One is a libertine, who

fancies he serves God while he gratifies his lusts; another is superstitious, and thinks to please him by monkish austerities. One is content with a dead faith, which neither "purifies the heart," nor "works by love;" another is persuaded he shall be saved by his good works, though imperfect, without faith in the righteousness of Christ. This lays the whole stress on orthodox principles; that thinks it indifferent what we believe. Some doubt not their safety, because they are of such a particular religious denomination; others are of opinion that all denominations stand alike fair for salvation. Here is a bigot, who esteems every circumstance in religion to be essential, and whatever he believes to be right and true must be a term of communion; there is a latitudinarian whose religion has little or nothing in it that is important, or worthy to be earnestly contended for. Here unaffecting speculation is triumphant; there ignorance is the mother of devotion. Here religion is dressed in gaudy attire, with Jewish, worldly pomp, insomuch that its first institution is hardly at all discernible; there the pure, external ordinances of God himself are rejected with scorn, from a swollen conceit of spirituality. Now all these contradictory parties will be equally stiff and positive in their notions; yet are all equally extravagant and monstrous, all opposite to divine revelation and the reason of things. And are all these, O my soul! are *all these* the rational sons of men? Are all these *sure* they are wise? Can truth, divine truth, be a system—a *system* did I say?—a heap of dotages? Can reason, strict reason, approve contradictions? or rather, must

we not assuredly conclude, "that madness is in their heart while they live?"

Nor shall we find more wisdom in their judgment of men, than of things. They conclude of characters in the lump; can hardly see anything amiable and good, when some things displease; nor are blemishes apt to be disgustful, when some good qualities shine. Superficial defects hide substantial excellencies from the vulgar eye; whilst the absence of all valuable accomplishments is easily supplied by mere sound, and empty show. Wisdom and virtue, meanly clothed, are despised; whilst ignorance and vice, dressed in purple, are honoured. An easy air, and genteel address, often recommend nonsense, and make flattery appear sincere; but an uncouth mode will cause the same persons to disrelish undissembled regard, and solid discretion. Even learned critics do sometimes defend the very absurdities of a favourite author, and censure what is truly sublime in another. Whole communities, nay, whole nations lie under the censure which belongs only to a part, and perhaps a small part of them. Thus mankind judge as though reason taught them to make the conclusion universal, when the premises are only particular.

II. Men judge not more precipitantly, than speak and act inconsiderately. How frequently may we see proper and improper confused—no respect had to time, or place, or persons; nor a thought of the obvious and unavoidable consequences! How many live as if there was no need of caution, no possible danger of missing the right, nor any extreme to be feared—as if nothing could follow from

any course of conduct, and a necessary cause would not produce its genuine effect—as if prudence and circumspection were names, and no power of deliberation had ever been given! They live at random, and seem to consider right and wrong with absolute indifference. In the religious life some are offensive, others stumble and fall, and some take offence when none is given. In the civil life, many ruin themselves in their worldly affairs, and others too, by indiscretion. Some live above their ability, engage in matters too high for them, and fall by those means by which they thought to rise. The imprudent pursuit of grandeur brings others into contempt, whilst they industriously seek to obtain a character which they cannot support; and climb to a pinnacle, where their brains are turned and they cannot stand. Many in a devout qualm engage in a course of strict religion, without a rational sense of its importance, or "counting the cost." Luke xiv. 28. They think not what offences and stumbling blocks are in the way—what artifices of Satan—what allurements of the flesh, and what terrors of the world are combined to turn them aside—how "strait the gate," how "narrow the path," (Matt. vii. 14,) how arduous the ascent, and how deceitful and impotent their souls—what self-denial, what humbleness of mind, what watchfulness and care, and what courage and determined resolution, are requisite for the purpose. They assure themselves that they will stand firm against all assaults, though they were at no pains to dig deep, and found themselves on a rock. Hence, when the rain descends, when the floods come, and

the winds blow and beat upon them, they fall, (Matt. vii. 26, 27,) and are carried headlong down the stream. Hence their goodness is as a morning cloud, and vanishes like the early dew. Hos. vi. 4. They either become profane, or are taken in the snare of some delusive opinion or heresy. "They turn away their ears from the truth, and are turned unto fables," (2 Tim. iv. 4,) and thus ends their religion.

III. Many appear to have false views of what is advantageous or hurtful, and draw false inferences from actions and events. In how strange a light do they look on strict piety, who disdain it as mean, or avoid it as unpleasant; and how come the paths of sin to appear honourable and blissful? Religious persons and spiritual conversation are by many shunned, as though they were dangerous, while the loose and profane are chosen for companions, as though they were most safe. They are not afraid to violate the laws of God, yet they dread his threatened vengeance. Hell is their terror, sin their sport and entertainment. They tremble at the effect, yet delight in its proper cause. But how absurd is it, mentally to separate misery from sin, when they can never be separated in fact? The eternal reason of things has made their connection inviolable. What false apprehension have many of their own cases! The aged and infirm think of years to come, and hence defer their intended preparations for death. The drunkard never knows his capacity, but thinks he may safely venture to take the other glass; nor does the covetous miser ever judge truly of his necessity, and therefore lives poor in the midst of plenty.

Every occurrence is perverted. The goodness of God, which would seem sufficient to melt hard hearts, and form them according to his will, becomes a mean of hardening them against him. If he gives to some abundance of worldly wealth, they use it as though it were a license given them to indulge wantonness, excess of riot, luxury, and all those sensual pleasures, which to others are forbidden. If honour and power are conferred on them, they act as though they were advanced above a scrupulous regard to the divine commands. They seem to say, "Who is the Lord that we should obey him?" Ex. v. 2. Because the wicked prosper, they conclude that it is quite safe to follow their ways: "and because sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed" (Eccl. viii. 11), they are bold in impiety, presuming on perpetual impunity. They see men despise piety, and even sit in the scorner's chair, yet no visible evil befalls them; hence some are tempted to think divine threats are but bug-bears, and religion but a fancy. On the contrary, pious people are distressed, often severely reproached and run down, and no visible regard manifested for all their care to please God. Upon this, others readily determine, that "it is vain to serve him!" Mal. iii. 14. Some, who made a plausible profession of strict religion, fall away, and prove themselves, by their after conduct, to have been but hypocrites; therefore, others carefully avoid any appearance of piety, that they may avoid hypocrisy. They expect to be accounted honest and upright, when they are openly wicked and glory in their shame.

IV. There are numbers who do not so much as attempt to form their judgment or regulate their practice, by reason. They follow the vogue without scruple. They seek no other test of truth, than that it is said by the great or the many; nor any other proof of the propriety and goodness of their behaviour, but that it is modish. Custom is to them instead of reason, and influences them much more powerfully, than the authority of God himself. Let their conduct be irrational, let it be wicked too, provided only it be fashionable. Has it a multitude to patronize it? Then it is no matter though it cannot stand the test of scripture; no, nor of common sense. The crowd, like a torrent, carries them along, and they lose themselves in it. Their weak minds are confused with the tumult, and made giddy with the glare of giddy pomp. Sedate thought and calm reason, by means of numberless airy vanities, lose their weight, and are resolved into fume and vapour. In this plight, it is no wonder that they esteem those contemptibly weak who choose rather to expose themselves to the censure of the world, than to offend God. They judge of religion itself by the fashion. By that they determine which of the divine commands it is proper to obey; and which of them, for the sake of decency, is to be laid aside. If religious discourse is reckoned impolite, a serious expression will shock a gay company, and a few would go near to disperse them. Though it is the will of God that sin should be reproved, and the sinner made ashamed, yet we would offend against modern politeness, should we discover even a calm disapprobation

of what is wickedly spoken or acted in company. They who would be quite acceptable to this world, must *at least seem* to approve what God condemns, that so none may ever be made uneasy by their presence. They must "say to every one that despises the Lord, and that walks after the imagination of his heart, Ye shall have peace, and no evil shall come upon you." Jer. xxiii. 17. "But, surely, the friendship of the world is enmity to God." James iv. 4. But let us proceed further, and take a view of men who mistake not their duty; who acknowledge the things "that are excellent, being instructed out of the law," and we cannot but conclude that they exceed in madness: for

V. Multitudes continually counteract their judgment and conscience when rightly informed. They own the soul to be more excellent than the body, yet are most anxious to provide for the latter. They spare not cost and pains to cure a bodily distemper, while the immortal spirit, all disordered, is quite neglected. Remedies are carefully sought for a head-ache, but none for a hard heart. A fever is deplored, irregular and distorted passions are indulged. The body is gorgeously clothed and delicately fed, while the soul is naked, without righteousness, and no bread of life sought after for its nourishment. It is of more value than the "whole world," yet is bartered away for a very small part of it, for vanity, for songs, for trifles. That heaven is infinitely preferable to this earth, eternal glory to temporal felicity, is not disputed; yet sinners choose to live here always. They are conscious to themselves, that

they would desire no other kind of blessedness than this world affords, could they but still enjoy it, and enjoy it fully, and, hence, grasp the present regardless of the future. They acknowledge that they should make it the very business of their life to please God, and that his favour is more valuable than the favour of all mankind; yet they gratify their appetites and humours, when they know they displease him in so doing; and if they stand fair in the opinion of men, are quite careless about his approbation. They commend virtue, but practise vice; and while they own that wickedness is the way to hell, walk boldly on in it at all adventures. They confess that reason should guide, and the passions should be governed by its dictates; yet when their passions become clamorous, the voice of reason is drowned, and its loudest remonstrances no more heard. The covetous man is drawn into absurdities by the love of money, the voluptuous hurries on in pursuit of ruining pleasures, and thirst of praise carries the ambitious headlong.

They make no suitable improvement of their own experiences, nor correct past follies by after observation. The world and its evil customs are infectious; they have been often caught in the same snare, yet never learn to be guarded and circumspect. The review of past scenes of guilty pleasures gives griping remorse, the present do not satisfy, yet many trials convince them not that the future will surely disappoint them. After drinking to excess, the heart is thirsty; and hunger succeeds the most plenteous repast. "In the midst of laughter the heart is

sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness." Prov. xiv. 13. For oftentimes reason is debauched, the conscience seared, the passions inflamed, the constitution broken, the estate ruined, and the person despised. Guilt is contracted, time wasted, and the spirits flag by means of an immoderate elevation. Sensual joys clog and surfeit, but do not content: they gratify the brute, but starve the man, and frequently ruin the Christian. Yet we see multitudes of mortals eagerly fluttering to grasp joys which, like airy phantoms, still elude their embraces, and are hardly the shadows of realities! Disappointed, they nevertheless still pursue, still go the tiresome road, and tread the same beaten path in vain! In fine, after numberless experiments, they neither learn the emptiness of earthly things, nor the deceitfulness of their own hearts.

VI. It is well known that madness hurries persons, who are affected with it, into most desperate courses: and this is the case of mankind. "They know the judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death" (Rom. ii. 4); yet they do those, and delight in them. They sin against plainest precepts, guarded with most awful threatenings. In the very sight of Sinai's burning mount, amidst the thunders of offended Jehovah, hardy rebels durst form a god of gold. Sinners are still the same. They sin against shocking terrors, felt by themselves; and disregard alluring offers of pardon, and charming promises of eternal salvation. They sin, while they are receiving tender mercies, never considering, "that the goodness of God should lead them to repentance" (Rom. ii. 4), and

while they suffer the infliction of severe judgments. Examples of despair, the fearful ends of wretched offenders, deter them not; nor are they persuaded to be religious by the death-bed joys of pure and living piety. Let their dearest friends, and the most learned and godly ministers, convince and beseech them, yet will they not yield themselves to God. Solomon, with all his wisdom, the royal authority, joined with the sublimest strains of the "sweet singer of Israel," the persuasive oratory of Apollos, with Peter's burning zeal, could not turn sinners from their course. Let miracles be wrought, the mountains removed, the dead raised, the deaf made to hear, and the blind to see; even these things will not have the force of argument with them. "Uncover destruction, make hell naked" before them, with open eyes they rush into those flames. Let angels come from heaven, and fiends from the infernals; let eternal raptures, and endless horrors, be presented lively to their view, and they will hardly so much as make a pause. Tell them, nay, show them, how sottish and foolish their way is, yet they will not be ashamed. Conscience speaks, but it is not heard; commands, but is not obeyed. What shall I say more? They "rush on God himself, on the thick bosses of his buckler"(Job xv. 26)—they provoke incensed Omnipotence to unequal engagement; defy his power, despise his truth, and like leviathans, "laugh at the shaking of his spear." Job xii. 29. They cannot successfully contend, nor is it possible to escape, yet they will not submit—will be broken rather than bow, and "dashed in pieces like a potter's vessel,"(Psa. xi. 9,)

rather than comply with the confessedly righteous will of God. They are told that eternal damnation cannot be avoided, nor eternal glory obtained, but only by the merits of Jesus Christ; yet many, (could it have been thought?) many make light even of a Saviour! despise the Redeemer! most horrid, most desperate thought! His exquisite agonies, his exceeding sorrowful soul, his bloody sweat, the soldiers' scourges, the crown of thorns, the cruel mockings, the painful and accursed death he endured for sin, instead of affecting them with reverence and love to his person, are the matter of their scorn; or, at best, received with cold indifference. "O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united." Gen. xlix. 6. "Be astonished, O ye heavens," at the madness, the daring impiety, of guilty mortals! "be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate." Jer. ii. 12.

VII. Madness discovers itself in absurd and unreasonable hopes. Earthly-minded and sensual persons hope to content their lustful appetites by gratifying them to the full; whereas it is plain, that all vicious passions, like the dropsy, increase by indulgence. Endeavours to satisfy them, and by that means to get rid of their importunate cravings, is the same as heaping fuel on fire in order to extinguish it, which yet only serves to heighten and perpetuate the flame. There is no mean that has a proper tendency to quell irregular desires, but only self-denial. Some hope to obtain heaven without holiness; "to be glorious in the eyes of the Lord," though quite unlike him; to dwell for ever in his presence, though "enemies in their

minds by wicked works;" and to enjoy spiritual blessedness, while they carnalize their affections, and more and more indispose themselves to relish it. Thus they separate what God has joined together, while they expect the end without the appointed means. They hope to be pardoned without a heart-purifying faith, and accepted of God without the imputed righteousness of Christ—to be embraced by that mercy which they grossly abuse, and spared by that patience which they continue to provoke. Nay, they propose, what is obviously impossible, to live with the wicked, the worldly, and debauched, and yet to die with the holy and self-denied; to be followers of the meek and humble Jesus, and yet indulge wrath and ambition; and to be happy without friendly intercourse with the Father of their spirits, and fountain of bliss; and hence, live contented, without "having fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ." 1 John i. 3. Though all fallible and prone to deceive, they nevertheless depend more firmly on each other's word, than on the promise and oath of God, "who cannot lie." Tit. i. 2. They hope to get victory over sin by slothful wishes, without striving earnestly against it, and to become somehow good, without ever "exercising themselves unto godliness." 1 Tim. iv. 7. Oh, what shocking disappointments they meet with! The higher they rise, the more dreadful their fall. They will be "cut down like a tree," (Job xix. 10,) and end in certain despair.

VIII. Madness appears in the precarious fickleness of human hearts. Mankind are blown hither and thither,

like withered leaves in autumn, or like chaff, the sport of winds. They are not only contradictory to each other, but the same individual is discordant with himself. One thing is approved in the morning, the contrary in the evening. Now love is predominant, but the next pulse beats disaffection to the same object. This hour the sinner, disturbed in mind, rejects a favourite lust with abhorrence; the next, he calls and embraces it. He now resolves to be religious in earnest, but presently defers it till to-morrow; and when the morrow is come, he has forgotten the whole.

Now the judgment is clear, and things appear in comely order; now it is covered with clouds, and what was order becomes confusion. Now the heart is calm, easy and pliant; now a tempest ruffles the bosom, and obstinacy that cannot bend takes place. Now mercy and kindness sweeten the temper, which is presently soured by revenge and moroseness. Now he steers a steady course this way, but turns to a different point with the next veering gale. Excellent sentiments are quickly blotted, and the last impressions razed out by the next succeeding. A determinate and fixed resolve but mocks the observer, and seems more like the effect of chance, than of judgment and deliberation.

How ludicrous are the quick changes of customs and fashions! yet each of them approved, and each of them censured in its turn by the very same persons! Now it pleases; now it gives disgust; and now it pleases again. The gay and fashionable, and they who live in affluent circumstances, are busied too, and even perplexed in the

variety of vanity, and wearied in the giddy chase—and though many of them are, in some lesser points, more polished than others, yet they afford us a prospect not more rational, nor less wild, than those they despise. Worldly prosperity, perverted from its use by human depravity, makes their passions impetuous, their impatience violent, and their judgment weak. This being the character, though not of all, yet of the greater part who glory in *high life*, what can follow from it but a wild inconstancy? O my soul! how evanid are human thoughts and human things! how delusive the scenes of mortal pleasure! and how little reason is there to depend on the power, or wisdom, or fidelity of the fallen human race! "Trust not in princes themselves, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help," (Psa. cxlvi. 3,) but rather "cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?" Isa. ii. 22. These characters are no fictions, nor exaggerations of the truth, but are all taken from the life. And though the half is not told, yet in what a shocking point of light do even these rough and imperfect sketches set mankind!

But what aggravates this madness to the highest degree is, that "after all they go to the dead." Solemn consideration! The gay and jovial, the rich, the great, the poor and mean, the sorrowful and afflicted—all depart hence, and are seen no more among the living! See whole ages swept away by the "besom of destruction!" noisy and bustling millions silent in the dust! and all their mortal honours, their sensual joys, and earthly cares, are for ever

departed with them! What authority or empire have Alexander the Great, Cyrus, or Cæsar now? Where are their favourites, their friends, their flatterers, and their subjects? Who fears their frowns, trembles at their threats, or courts their favour in the house of silence? And what do their triumphs and spoils avail them now? Implacable enemies are hushed into everlasting peace. Are these the men that "made the earth tremble, that shook kingdoms?" Isa. xiv. 16. They are become weak as the meanest; their pomp is brought down to the grave; the worm is spread under them, and the worms cover them. Isa. xiv. 10, 11. Thus mankind in every age bustle and die. Like bubbles they are blown up, and glitter and break; like flowers they spring, bloom, and are cut down, and like "shadows they pass away," and "continue not." Job xiv. 2. But whither do they pass? Where shall our curious or rather solicitous thoughts follow them? Is death the end of their existence? No; "after that comes the judgment." They are summoned to appear before the august, the impartial, and sovereign Judge; they stand at his bar, and hear an irrevocable doom. What doom! Can we bear to contemplate the state of those, who madly provoked their Judge, and perished impenitent? Does not the heart recoil, the imagination startle, at the direful thought of a horrible gloom—regions of eternal despair—the steam of sulphur mixed with unquenchable fire—the torturing gripes, the relentless lashings of a guilty conscience, that gnawing, never-dying vulture—the insufferable impression of almighty wrath, and the hideous shrieks

of damned souls? And are the bare thoughts of these things shocking? what, then, will it be to endure them? And can we judge those to be sober, and in their right minds, who are in continual danger of plunging into these miseries, and yet are secure and careless about any endeavour to escape from the wrath to come? What an amazing scene do the sons and daughters of pleasure exhibit to us! They are daily exposed to a thousand deaths; are easily broken by numberless unforeseen accidents; and if they die impenitent, they are for ever undone: yet are no more alarmed than if they were immortal. All thoughtless, all volatile, hating serious things, and lectures of death, which, therefore, surprises them, finds them unprovided, hurries them away, and pushes them reluctant down the dreadful precipice—from time into eternity. O the hardy adventure! to take a leap in the dark into an endless, unalterable state! Merry company, balls, assemblies, and plays, amuse them so, that they forget they are mortal, till they die, and see not their danger till they are beyond relief. They live in jest, "and after that they go to the dead" in earnest. What degree of folly is it to catch a feather, and let go a crown! to gain a toy, and lose a kingdom! for a morsel, to barter a birth-right! and for a moment's pleasure, to part with everlasting joys, and suffer eternal woes! Are these your men of sense, who look indignant on those who are so weak as to be deeply concerned about such important affairs? "Vain man, forsooth, would be wise, though he is born like a wild ass's colt." Job xi. 12. It is an inexpressible absurdity, that

temporal things, whether riches, honour, or pleasure, should engross the intensest thoughts of beings bound for eternity. And it is an eternal solecism in religion, to be engaged about the concerns of it in a cold and indifferent manner. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Matt. xi. 12.

After considering all these things, will it seem an abuse of mankind, if I compare this world to a great bedlam, filled with persons strangely and variously distracted? Some are so desperate as to refuse all salutary medicines; and the habit so inveterate, as to non-plus the physician's skill, and make him almost despair of their cure. Some appear hopeful for awhile, but relapse, and their case is more dangerous than before. And some are actually recovered in a less, some in a greater degree; but not so much as one perfectly well. My text will warrant the comparison; and I may not flatter mankind by soothing expressions, when their case requires plain dealing; nor be so polite as not to learn of God how to speak, when I deliver his message.

From the whole we are taught

1. How little reason any one has to be puffed up with popular applause, or dispirited when he does not obtain it. For, consider, who are the judges? Are they all persons of sound mind, whose conclusions are according to truth? Far from it. It is true, all fancy themselves mighty good judges of merit; but I speak charitably, when I say, perhaps one in a hundred can distinguish. That soul, therefore, is lighter than vanity that is tossed hither and

thither, according to the ebbing and flowing tides of inconstant affections. The favourable opinion of mankind is chiefly to be valued as it gives an opportunity to serve their best interests more successfully.

2. How much reason there is in that divine exhortation, "Be not conformed to this world." Rom. xii. 2. Do not act upon its principles, nor accommodate yourselves to its evil customs and modes. For this world is at variance with God, and "no man can serve two masters." Matt. vi. 24. It is here modish to make light of religion, and treat it, if treated at all, with an air of the most absolute indifference and unconcern. Nay, with many it is polite, to sneer at solemn devotion, and make a mock of sin. He appears big, who dares trample on sacred and inviolable authority, and laugh at divine threatenings; and wise, who can ridicule the mysteries of the gospel. He who is a companion of such fools shall be destroyed. Prov. xiii. 20.

Lastly. Let the follies of others be a motive to engage your more earnest pursuit of saving wisdom. "Seek her as silver, search for her as for hidden treasure." Prov. ii. 4. "Happy is the man that finds her, for she is more precious than silver, than fine gold and rubies—her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. Prov. iii. 13—15 and 17. If any of you lack this spiritual wisdom, ask it of God, who gives liberally and upbraids not; and let it ever be a small matter with you, to be judged weak and foolish, by a mad world, provided always that you are wise to salvation.

THE END.

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